

# HEREFORDSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGICAL NEWS



HAN 47      March 1987

WOOLHOPE CLUB  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH SECTION

## CONTENTS

|  |    |
|--|----|
| ARS OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE FOR 1987.....   | 2  |
| COMMITTEE FOR CO-ORDINATION OF RESEARCH ON <i>ARICONIUM</i> .....  | 2  |
| PROGRAMME MARCH-AUGUST 1987 .....  | 2  |
| MARGARET GELLING LECTURE.....  | 3  |
| EDITORIAL.....   | 3  |
| THE DESTRUCTION OF MONMOUTH.....   | 4  |
| CRASWALL PRIORY.....   | 4  |
| AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHS .....   | 4  |
| PALACE YARD, HEREFORD .....  | 5  |
| JOINT MEETING OF THE BOTANICAL, NATURAL HISTORY AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL<br>SECTIONS ON 19 <sup>TH</sup> MAY, 1985, AT BODENHAM..... | 5  |
| A FEW NOTES ON A REPUTED ROMAN ROAD AND OTHER SITES ON MILTON HILL<br>AND LITTLE MOUNTAIN.....                                 | 5  |
| FURTHER TO THE FIELD MEETING HELD IN THE BRILLEY, MICHAELCHURCH AND<br>NEWCHURCH AREA ON 17 <sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER, 1985 ..... | 5  |
| EARLY SITES OF WIGMORE ABBEY .....   | 8  |
| KENTCHURCH, TREGATE AND GLYNSTON, 23 <sup>RD</sup> NOVEMBER, 1986 .....  | 12 |
| FIELD MEETING TO EWYAS HAROLD.....   | 13 |
| THE DOWARD AREA – A MEETING ON JUNE 28 <sup>TH</sup> , 1985 .....  | 14 |

**HEREFORDSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGICAL NEWS  
WOOLHOPE CLUB  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH SECTION**

**No. 47     March 1987**

**ARS OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE FOR 1987**

|                           |  |
|---------------------------|--|
| <u>Chairman:</u>          | Mr P Halliwell   |
| <u>Secretary:</u>         | Mr M Hemming   |
| <u>Treasurer:</u>         | Mr J Harding   |
| <u>Field Secretary:</u>   | Mr M Hemming   |
| <u>Editor:</u>            | Mr R Shoemith  |
| <u>Assistant Editor:</u>  | Mr C E Attfield  |
| <u>Committee Members:</u> | Mrs R Richardson<br>Mrs R Skelton<br>Miss M Thomas<br>Mrs B Harding<br>Mrs E M Taylor<br>Mr R E Kay<br>Mr G Sprackling |

**COMMITTEE FOR CO-ORDINATION OF RESEARCH ON *ARICONIUM***

**A committee has been set up under the aegis of the Forest of Dean Archaeological Group to co-ordinate future work and consolidate reports on previous exploration of *Ariconium*.**

In addition to the Forest of Dean Group, the other members will be the Monmouth Archaeological Society, The Gloucester and Bristol Research Group and the Woolhope Archaeological Research Section.

We will be represented on the committee by:

Mrs R Richardson  
Mrs R Skelton  
Mr P Halliwell

**PROGRAMME MARCH-AUGUST 1987**

Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> March                      Investigation of Downton Church     Meet at Downton Church at

|                                |   |  |
|--------------------------------|---|--|
| Sunday 26 <sup>th</sup> April  | Examination of some early churches  | 11.00 am<br>Leader J W Tonkin<br>Contact P Halliwell<br>Meet at Bredwardine Church at 11.00 am<br>Leader Mrs J Lawes |
| Thursday 21 <sup>st</sup> May  | Interpretation of air photographs with reference to Herefordshire<br>Lecture by Adrian Tindall, County Archaeological Officer | College for the Blind, College Road, 7.15 pm (Audio-visual Room, A15)  |
| Sunday 14 <sup>th</sup> June   | Investigation of Corras site, Chapel and Motte  | Meet at Great Corras Farm, Kentchurch, at 11.00 am<br>Leader Miss M Thomas   |
| Sunday 26 <sup>th</sup> July** | Offa's Dyke – Latest investigations   | Meet at Knighton (car park behind Norton Arms Hotel in main street) at 11.00 am<br>Leader P Halliwell                |

#### Notes

1. \*\*If there is a change of date members will be notified.
2. In case of bad weather contact the leader or Committee member.
3. Guests are welcome.
4. Members are advised to wear suitable clothing and footwear, and to bring food and hot drinks.

#### **ADVANCE NOTICE MARGARET GELLING LECTURE**

A lecture by Dr Margaret Gelling has been arranged by the Friends of the Record Office on Friday 6<sup>th</sup> November, 1987 on:

#### **The Study of Field Names**

All members of the Archaeological Research Section are very cordially invited to attend. The venue and time of the lecture will be announced later. This lecture will be of particular significance to members because of our current Herefordshire Field Name Study.

#### **EDITORIAL**

I would like to express my appreciation, on behalf of the Research Section, to Clarry Attfield for all the work he has put in as Editor of the newsletter over the last few years. We wish him well in his retirement from work and trust that he will continue as Assistant Editor for many years to come.

His plea for help was taken up by the staff of the Hereford Archaeology Unit who have all aided in the typing and presentation of this issue.

**Ron Shoesmith**

#### **NEWS ITEMS**

## **THE DESTRUCTION OF MONMOUTH**

Monmouth Archaeological Society have sent us a desperate plea for help. During the last few months, unique archaeological levels have been lost without any adequate recording and it appears that the rate of destruction is accelerating.

Following extremely important discoveries at 75 Monnow Street in September 1986, where over 5ft of sealed floor deposits dating from the 12<sup>th</sup> century were almost totally destroyed, Monmouth Archaeological Society campaigned for access to future sites in the area to allow adequate archaeological investigation. Unfortunately, they were not supported to any great extent by the Monmouth District Council and further destruction occurred in early February 1987 at 49 Monnow Street where, although similar floor levels had been preserved, developers refused permission for archaeological investigation.

Even worse may follow – the District Council in an emergency session agreed to the demolition of 83, 85 and 87 Monnow Street (the first two being listed buildings). Work started immediately and once again it would appear that there will be no delay in rebuilding to allow for archaeological research.

Your letters are needed. Write to your local MP, to Monmouth District Council (Mamhilad, Pontypool, Gwent), to the Welsh Office and to the press. Please express your concern. The Newsletter Editor would appreciate copies of letters and replies for inclusion in future editions.

## **CRASWALL PRIORY**

'Rescue News', the quarterly publication of the Trust for British Archaeology, contained an article with local flavour in its Winter 1986 issue (No 41). Entitled 'NEGLECT AND DECAY: THE CASE OF CRASWALL PRIORY', the article presents a scathing attack on the lack of national funding for the consolidation of the remains of this unique ancient monument.

Craswall Priory is the only English House of the Order of Grandmont which survives in a recognisable state, retaining its individual Grandmontine ground plan. The ruins are now in a deplorable state, with falls of masonry an all too frequent occurrence.

Copies of 'Rescue News' can be obtained from:

RESCUE  
15A Bull Plain  
HERTFORD SG14 1DX

Price 60p per copy.

## **AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHS**

We have been invited by Adrian Tindall, the new County Archaeology Officer, to make use of the aerial photographic cover of the county. In Herefordshire, to date, work has been concentrated on the alluvial deposits, but it is hoped to extend the coverage in the future.

The collection is based in Worcester, and Mr Tindall can be contacted at:

Archaeology Section  
Hereford and Worcester County Council  
Tetbury Drive  
Warndon  
WORCESTER WR4 9LS

## **PALACE YARD, HEREFORD**

The Hereford Archaeological Unit will be excavating the site next to the SPCK bookshop for the next two months. This site, adjoining the postulated road leading to the Saxon ford across the Wye, is one of the most important areas to be excavated in recent years.

At the time of writing, dumped material of the Victorian period has been removed revealing a mortar floor associated with a stone base and walls. Below this is a cobbled surface.

Members of the Archaeological Research Group are welcome to visit and should approach the Site Supervisor, Mr Alan Thomas.

## **JOINT MEETING OF THE BOTANICAL, NATURAL HISTORY AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SECTIONS ON 19<sup>TH</sup> MAY, 1985, AT BODENHAM**

Members were invited to join the Botanical and Natural History sections in Hedgerow Dating at Bodenham, led by Dr Robert Cameron. Armed with record sheets, the party divided into groups to count species on the basis of the Hooper formula of 100 years per woody species per 30 metres of hedge – which is really more realistic in eastern England than in the west.

Following a footpath alongside field boundaries between the Isle of Rhea and Bowley Town and returning down Bowley Lane, the average counts ranged from:

- a) 3.5 species with no hazel, field maple or dogwood. These were 19<sup>th</sup> century enclosure hedges but richer than average for that date due to seeding from nearby older hedges.
- b) 5 species with little hazel, mostly hawthorn, elder and some holly. This hedge was probably a pre-1612 hedge between two of Bowley's open fields, Litherfield and Quarrelstone Field. It was thinner than one would expect but, with adjacent grazing, hedges can eventually become patchy with no ground flora, whereas those flanking routeways are richer.
- c) 7 species with mostly hazel, maple and holly. These were the oldest hedges found, and the preponderance of hazel indicates a woodland origin. This section flanked a lane where the Knight Hospitallers of Dinmore owned five houses in 1505, and Bowley Lane itself, which is a continuation of a Roman road.

Afternoon work continued by 17<sup>th</sup> century Dudales Hope Farm, beside a parish boundary and woodland – which would imply good results. However, the old hedge line and ditch had fallen into disrepair, been patchily replanted and then bounded by a wire fence. The counts averaged 3 species (hazel, hawthorn and much sycamore). Perhaps a good hedge had never been made with reliance on the bank as a boundary, or people may have had rights to collect wood along the edge of the parish boundary.

In eastern England and Worcestershire, hedges are virtually hawthorn and elder whereas those in Herefordshire are comparatively richer. To the west a differing climate gives hazel scrub with hawthorn scrub to the east, but both will produce hawthorn scrub as a result of post-grazing pressures.

## **A FEW NOTES ON A REPUTED ROMAN ROAD AND OTHER SITES ON MILTON HILL AND LITTLE MOUNTAIN FURTHER TO THE FIELD MEETING HELD IN THE BRILLEY, MICHAELCHURCH AND NEWCHURCH AREA ON 17<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER, 1985**

Although, unfortunately, unable to attend the above meeting the writer hopes that the following brief notes (written under pressure from our illustrious Chairman) will be of interest to those members who did take part, and to others who may visit this scenic and hilly portion of our County's western borders, possibly with the objective of undertaking more detailed and knowledgeable research!

Milton Hill forms an attractive stretch of partly open moorland and rough pasturage rising to a height of a little over 1,050ft OD, its northern fern-clad slopes dropping to Michaelchurch in the Arrow valley below and looking across to the similar but more extensive fern-clad summits of Disgwyffa beyond.

A green track, which crosses Milton Hill from east to west partly on a raised agger, has a dry-built stone field wall on its south side which serves both as a parish and county boundary and incidentally marks the dividing line between England and Wales. This track, after leaving the rough pasture and fern, continues to the east as a narrow disused green lane between overgrown hedges (almost impassible) before joining at a tangent to the minor road running west from Brillley Mountain crossroads (GR 258506). It would seem that this track and disused lane are on the line of an assumed Roman road which ran from the neighbourhood of Mortimer's Cross through Court of Noke, Lyonshall, Elsdon, Brillley Mountain crossroads, Milton Hill and along the ridge westwards towards the problematical rectilinear earthwork on Little Mountain. Close to the south side of this track, where it crosses Milton Hill, are two dated boundary stones of 1817 and 1845. At this time it almost certainly formed part of the drove way which further to the west beyond Little Mountain crossed Newchurch Hill and Allt Derw before descending to Rhulen and Cregina in the Edw Valley. North of the green trackway the summit of Milton Hill has at some time been enclosed by an intake from the moorland and in the pasture so formed, near its highest point, are the badly reduced ruins of a substantially built cottage, probably of early 19<sup>th</sup> century date. South-west of the summit of Milton Hill, within the boundary of a now vanished fir plantation, are some old quarry workings. There are others immediately north of the supposed course of the Roman road in the same vicinity (GR 239497) which now form deep grassy hollows. To the west of the boundary stones mentioned above, where the green track merges or coincides for a short distance with a poorly-metalled and little-used road, there is a standing stone, 3ft high, of much greater antiquity (GR 237496).

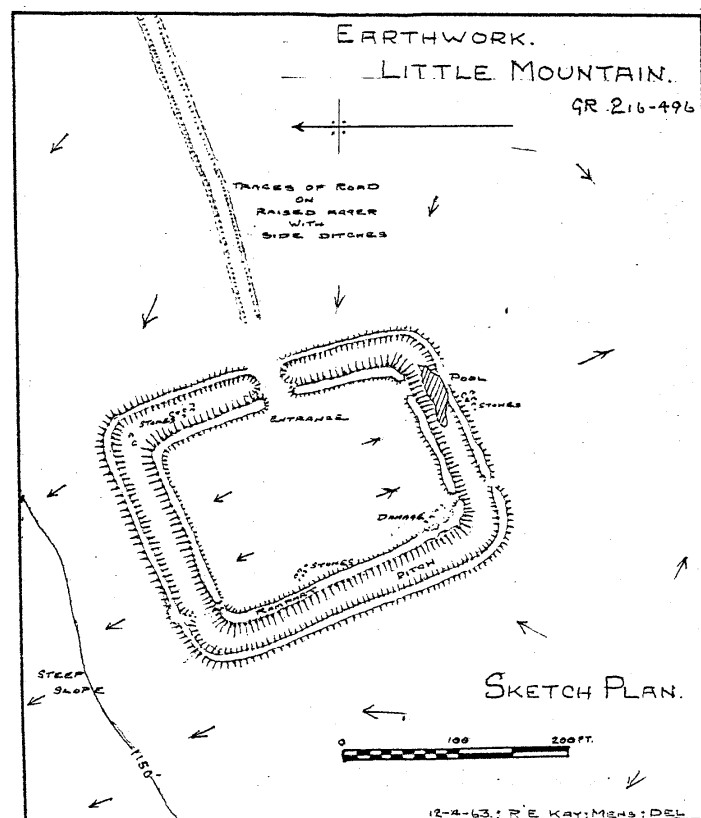
Westwards from the standing stone, the course of the assumed Roman road is taken up by a little-used green lane running between boundary banks, which at times delineate a surprisingly wide grass verge, seeming to confirm its use at one time as a drove way. Here and there are traces of an agger and of metalling, but nothing very Roman in appearance. At GR 226495 the green lane becomes a used farm track for a short distance before passing through a gate on to the grassy expanse of rough pasture forming the summit plateau of Little Mountain. The reputed Roman road can be followed as a slightly raised agger between shallow side ditches on straight alignments over the gently rounded plateau to the rectilinear earthwork above the edge of its steep north-west escarpment, a little below the summit (at 1,171ft OD) of the hill, overlooking the deep valley of a side tributary of the Arrow and the heights beyond.

The earthwork occupies a shallow hollow on the northwest shoulder of the hill. The brook, which forms a tributary of the Arrow, flows 200ft below and on this side the slope is almost precipitous, but on the other sides any slope is slight or the ground is level or even rises a little. The remains are singularly well preserved. The enclosed oblong area, which is rather more than half an acre in extent, is defended by a rampart with an external ditch and counterscarp bank. Its angles are rounded and the longer axis of its earthworks is north-west/south-east. There is a well defined entrance on the north-east, not quite in the middle of one of the longer sides, marked by a simple opening in the rampart with, outside, a causeway or mass of earth left unexcavated across the ditch when it was dug. The opening is over 20ft wide, the rampart being bowed slightly outwards to the entrance, making the enclosed area even less of a perfect rectangle, for the southeast side is shorter than the northwest. The measurements from the crest of the ramparts of 45 yards by 65 yards, as given by the RCAHM Inventory of Radnorshire, seem to be a little underestimated. Although sparsely covered with gorse and fern, the earthworks are remarkably distinct and have suffered only slight damage on the south. The rampart stands in places with an external height of nearly 6ft above the present bottom of the ditch and from 1ft to 2ft 6ins above the

interior. The continuous counterscarp bank has an external height of 2ft 6ins, dropping a maximum of 4ft 6ins to the ditch, which is 27ft wide at the top of the counterscarp. The rampart appears to be constructed from the earth and stone rubble cast up from the excavations of the ditch. There is no certain visible evidence of any stone revetment. The interior area is reasonably level, in places it seems to have been partially made up. Surface indications of any internal structures are lacking although there is a small quantity of loose rubble lying in a limited area of both ditch and interior.

Traces of a ditched and banked up roadway 8ft in width leaving the entrance and proceeding across the plateau top, first in a northeast and then in an easterly direction, are very distinct. The disused green lane and parish boundary, already described, then falls into its alignment in half a mile, just north of Caeau Farm.

The date and purpose of the earthwork is obscure. There is little specifically Roman about its appearance and its flat-bottomed almost waterlogged ditch looks distinctly un-Roman! It has been variously considered in the past as a fortlet or signal station; however, the late experts on Romano-British remains, Messrs Nash-Williams and Ian Richmond both discuss the earthwork as being in effect an upland version of a Medieval homestead moat!



A site that is similar in appearance is the small rectangular earthwork on Gibbet Hill near Llanfair Caereinion, Montgomeryshire, which on partial excavation has shown sparse Roman evidence. The Little Mountain site also has a fairly close affinity with the rectangular earthworks on Garway Hill, Herefordshire and at Caer Din Ring in Mainstoke parish, Salop. Such defensive works of varying area seem to be scattered about the Welsh Marches and as far west as Cardiganshire, with a number in south Carmarthenshire and Pembrokeshire. Two examples from the latter shires have, on excavation, been found to enclose stone buildings of farm or debased villa type, showing dating evidence for 1<sup>st</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> century occupation. While it is premature to jump to any conclusions one way or the other, without



further expert fieldwork and trial excavation, it should be remembered that considerable former gaps in our knowledge of the road and fort systems of Roman occupied Wales have, in the last couple of decades, been filled. The discovery of the campaign fort at Clifford, and more permanent auxiliary forts under the earthworks of Colwyn Castle and at Hindwell Farm near Walton have implications for the area visited during the course of today's field meeting. Finally, of geological interest are a number of rough blocks of stone, rich in fossils, scattered about the plateau top of Little Mountain. The above notes on Milton Hill were compiled in February 1973, and the plan and notes on the Little Mountain earthwork as long ago as April 1963, so caution is advised in case the topography has altered since those dates.

**R E Kay**  
**22<sup>nd</sup> February, 1987**

### **EARLY SITES OF WIGMORE ABBEY**

On Sunday 18th May, 1986 members paid a visit to Wigmore to examine the reputed site of a supposed 'interim foundation' of the Victorine Augustine Abbey of Wigmore, finally established near Paytoe, Adforton in about 1172. This earlier site (NGR 412688), just north of the steep road from the village towards Chapel Farm, is a pasture sloping steeply and then almost precipitously into the valley of a small stream which flows eastwards through the lower part of the village<sup>1</sup>. Across the little valley the ground rises again to a narrow ridged spur, lower than that of the spine of the ridge on which the reputed site is placed. On this lower spur, at its eastern extremity, the crest rises to a knoll on which is situated the parish church. Further along it to the west, towards its neck, are mutilated earthworks perhaps relating to a primary site of Wigmore Castle still further to the west. This, in the 11th and 12th centuries was the caput of the Mortimers and was strongly fortified in earthwork and stone to become one of the greater Border castles. A small borough and market grew up in the little valley below the church, but no charter seems to have been granted so it probably never had valid borough status. However, the vill was valued at £7.00 in Domesday, a not inconsiderable sum. Some slight indications of what may have been burgage plots have been traced in the layout of the cottages and their gardens and paddocks below the church, extending up the little valley and across the main road to the east.

The reputed site of the 'interim foundation' of Wigmore Abbey shows no surface indications of any masonry building or of platforms on which even a wooden or half-timbered building could have stood. The sloping field shows the remains only of ancient trackways, some existing as deep, well-worn hollow-ways and others as ramps or scarps ascending and descending the slope in several directions. The most prominent, descending to the bottom of the valley in a north-westerly direction, seems to be a deeply cut hollow-way which has superseded a broader ramp above it. On the south-east it terminates and makes a junction with the Chapel Farm roadway and here are scoops and banks of bygone quarrying, probably of no great age and made for the extraction of hardcore for the repair of the adjacent roads in pre-tarmacadam days. From these grass-grown hollows another hollow-way, banked up on its downhill side, extends for some distance, rising towards the west before descending again as a broad ramp to the northwest and fading out. A shallow sunken track leads off it to the southwest to make a junction with the Chapel Farm road. To the southwest a small paddock has had its hedge removed and its area thrown into the larger pasture. The low defining banks remain. A levelled area within seems to have been the result of agricultural work and not bygone building operations. The banks, hollows and trackways described are all of differing dates and were formed by the requirements of differing usages, access for wheeled vehicles, cattle etc.

In view of the Group's detailed examination of the field concerned, including the digging of trial excavation trenches, it was agreed that the reputed site of a possible interim monastic building could not be borne out by the survey.

---

<sup>1</sup> This site suits the description on pp 431 and 433 of the Transactions, XXXIX (1969) and is still known to the locals as Jacob's Ladder.

Wigmore (Shobdon) was the first of six houses of the Victorine Augustine order to be established in England as well as being the mother house of St Augustine's Abbey in Bristol (founded in 1153) and which became the main Victorine house in this country. It is now Bristol Cathedral.

The foundation of a monastery in post-Conquest England was frequently a very protracted business due to many causes, chief amongst which were investigations as to the suitability of the site, its foundation and continuing endowments. All these could be beset by long drawn out litigation especially on the early death of a founder or his heirs. We are fortunate in the fact that, although there has been an almost complete loss of the Wigmore Abbey archives and no cartulary is known to have survived, other literary material relating to the apparent migration of the canons from one site to another before finding permanency near Paytoe just north of Wigmore exists in a History, Annals and Chronicle. The first is unreliable, the second too brief, but the third, although not without defects, mainly in a refusal to assign dates, is invaluable in giving the troubled, complex history of the canons before settling at the final chosen site of their abbey. The earlier part of the Chronicle seems to have been originally written at a time contemporary to the events described, but the latter part seems to be a copy, not necessarily very true, of happenings at this time, written in French of the 14th century.

Briefly then, the foundation is ascribed to one Oliver de Merlimond, a steward to Hugh Mortimer (1st) who had inherited Ledlicot and been given Shobdon by his lord. At Shobdon there was a timber castle on a ring motte and a chapel dedicated to St Juliana, subject to the parish church of Aymestrey. De Merlimond rebuilt this chapel in an ornate Norman style and then acquired for it the status of a parish church and separate from Aymestrey. This has been dated by Prof Zerniki and Pevsner to about 1135. About 1140 he proceeded to establish a small community of regular Canons of St Victor, giving the advowson of his newly built church at Shobdon and properties at Letton (west of Wigmore) and Ledlicot (east of Shobdon) for their support. Hugh Mortimer (1st) does not seem to have entirely agreed with the grants of his steward and, after considering moving the Canons away from the troubled areas of the Welsh Marches to Chelmarsh, he seems actually to have moved them to Eye (probably Lye in Aymestrey) and then nearer to his castle at Wigmore. In the meanwhile (c 1143?), apparently owing to many factors including the unsettled state of the Welsh borders, quarrels between the Mortimers and the Bishop of Hereford, and increasing litigation over the endowments given to the Canons at Shobdon, some of the canons were withdrawn to St Victor's Abbey in Paris and three others sent out to replace them.

The site offered to the canons as a temporary measure at Wigmore was probably a burgage house. It proved to be too narrow and squalid to make a dwelling for them, with undesirable neighbours, a shortage of water and a hard climb up to the church.

It was further complicated by the fact that in 1100, Ralph de Mortimer established three prebends in Wigmore parish church, probably rebuilding it at the same time, for in 1105 it was re-dedicated by the Bishop of Hereford. It would seem to have been served by three secular canons two of which were vacant at this time and were offered to the Canons of St Victor. This was not satisfactory and the canons seem to have been moved from Wigmore, possibly to Byton for a short while, then back to Shobdon and eventually back again to Wigmore!

During this time the Chronicle states that the canons continued to search for a more suitable site, which seems to have been found a mile and a half north of Wigmore near Paytoe. They appear to have shown interest in possessing this site from an early but unstipulated date. Eventually they gained a grant of it, wooden huts were built and the community was "refounded". The foundation stone of their conventual church was laid in 1172 (?) and the high altar dedicated in 1179. Most or probably all of the conventual church was laid out in the 12th century as was much of the cloistral and domestic ranges but the whole establishment suffered great destruction at the hands of the Welsh during the reign of King

John. The east limb of the church was rebuilt and greatly enlarged during the 14th century and the establishment received mitred status in 1380. It was finally dissolved in 1538. In the two or three decades following the original foundation at Shobdon it would appear that the canons had a difficult time, with almost continual litigation over the confirmation of the original and subsequent endowments together with finding a site satisfactory not only to themselves but also to the Mortimer lords. This, plus the state of the border at the time, would have mitigated against even the contemplation of erecting permanent conventual buildings. Indeed, for the first decade or so there is little mention of more than three canons and at times this seems to have been reduced to one. In any case the early founding of a daughter house at Bristol in 1153 (?) would have been likely to put a strain on numbers. The daughter house, much more well endowed, rapidly attracted a full complement of canons, and there being no problems regarding site and endowments, permanent and splendid buildings were commenced almost immediately. It soon became independent of its mother house and within a short time became the supreme house of the Victorine Augustine Order in England. It can be surmised with some probability that a considerable percentage of the canons intended for the foundation at Shobdon, owing to the uncertain temper and wishes of the Mortimers, continued to remain at St Victor's Abbey in Paris. They would have been distributed temporarily to other of its daughter houses until such time as suitable permanent accommodation had been created for them. Until this took place it would not have been unusual for the canons of Shobdon, and the reputed successive sites, to have been "boarded out or attached" on a temporary basis to other neighbouring Augustine houses, not necessarily Victorine, such as Llanthony. The comparative poverty of the initial endowment of "Wigmore Abbey" at Shobdon would be another factor against an early start on the erection of permanent buildings. It was not until 1160 or later that further valuable gifts and endowments were added to those so grudgingly confirmed by Hugh Mortimer (1st and 2nd), so ensuring that the commencement of building a permanent conventual church and cloistral buildings was a more viable proposition.

This is the strong case that can be made for the supposition that there were no permanent monastic buildings for the Victorine Augustine Canons at Shobdon or elsewhere until their arrival at the present site of Wigmore Abbey near Paytoe.

To relate the remains of the former ornate Norman parish church at Shobdon as being constructed for the Victorine canons seem to be quite as erroneous as it would be to relate the building of the equally ornate contemporary Norman church at Kilpeck to the monks of the small alien Benedictine priory founded nearby early in the twelfth century.

The post-Dissolution razing of the greater part of the Wigmore Abbey monastic church, including a more or less complete clearance of the eastern parts and the east and south cloistral ranges, means that some difficulties remain as to the exact date of the commencement of permanent buildings at the present site. Normally the construction of the monastic church would be commenced at the eastern end. At Wigmore the remains of the eastern end of the Norman church was submerged beneath the foundations of the lengthy aisled eastern rebuilding and enlargement of the church during the 13th and 14th centuries. This has, in turn, been levelled to almost disappear below the turf. The aisleless nave, now reduced to rubble fragments of the south wall, was apparently vaulted in seven bays. The RCHM gives it a probable construction date early in the last quarter of the 12th century, which is probably correct, but erroneously gives its foundation date as 1179. This was the dedication date of the high altar at the E end of the Norman church. The foundation date given in the Chronicle is 1172. This date also is probably incorrect for it would give only a period of seven years for the building of the church. This seems to be rather too short a time, even assuming that the nave was uncompleted at the time of the dedication, which is unlikely. It is, of course, possible that the church was commenced before the ceremonial of its foundation and the laying of the appropriate consecrated stone. A closer examination of the existing worked masonry remains, both in situ and lying loose, together with an exploratory excavation within the foundations of the later eastern limb of the church, is

desirable to confirm more accurate constructional dates, particularly as one eminent ecclesiastical architectural authority gave a date of 1140-50 to certain details of the Norman structure then (1934) in situ and lying loose.

Scattered architectural fragments built into nearby cottages and houses in Adforton, Walton and Letton, and said to have strayed from Wigmore Abbey, require close examination, particularly those at Letton, which became a grange of the Abbey. Here a couple of fragments seem to support a date earlier than 1172. These may, of course, pertain to a vanished Norman non-monastic chapelry of mid 12th century date.

R E Kay  
25<sup>th</sup> January, 1987

### References

- The Anglo Norman Chronicle of Wigmore Abbey, J C Dickinson & P T Ricketts, *Trans Woolhope Naturalists' Field Club*, XXXIX, (1969), 413-46  
*Wigmore Abbey*, H Brakspeare, *Arch. J.*, XC, (1934), 26-51.  
*The Royal Commission on Historical Monuments: Herefordshire*, Vol 3, Northwest, (1934), 1-3.  
*A Guide to the Abbeys of England and Wales*, Anthony New, (1985),450-2.

## **KENTCHURCH, TREGATE AND GLYNSTON, 23<sup>RD</sup> NOVEMBER, 1986**

Members were met at Castlefields Farm in Kentchurch parish by Stephen Clarke, who had conducted the excavation of the 1<sup>st</sup> century Roman fort which he had sighted when looking across the Monnow valley from the Grosmont road. Seen from that angle, part of the rampart was still visible as a slight earthwork.

The excavation by the Monmouth Archaeological Society during the summer of 1986 provided evidence of timber buildings of two periods, both on the same alignment. The excavation through the rampart and a defence ditch led to the deduction that the two forts were of different sizes. Large quantities of pottery were found, including some Claudio-Neronian Samian. The coin evidence ends in the mid-70's AD.

Through the kindness of the farmer the trench had been left open for us and though rain and sheep had blurred some details, we were still able to see the sleeper beam trenches and the great quantities of burnt daub from the buildings. The site is well placed in relationship to the southwest route across the hills to Abergavenny, and the northeast up the valley would connect with Pontrilas and Kenchester. Down the valley to the southeast is Monmouth, where evidence of another Roman fort has recently been found by the Monmouth Archaeological Society, just to the west of Monmouth.

The importance of this new discovery is its very early date which throws new light on the Scapulan campaign of 48 AD. Steve Clarke gave us the opportunity to examine the pottery and other finds and to see plans, drawings and photographs in the welcome shelter of a barn.

Members heroically decided to control their desire for lunch in order to have a look at a site across the road from the Great Corras Farm further to the northwest up the Monnow valley. This was known to have been the site of a Deserted Medieval Village but some stone foundations were thought to be worth investigation. We were rewarded by improved weather and the discovery by Mr R Kay of what may be the foundations of a chapel. Although most of the stone foundations which could be seen must relate to the earlier Great Corras house and farm buildings thought to have been on the site, some foundations appear to go through the hedge into the garden of the neighbouring house where a small motte stands high above the road and the river. The motte has been partly demolished and is known to have had a Home Guard pillbox built onto it during the last war.

Members thought the site worthy of further investigation to examine the possible chapel and to make a plan of the foundations and of some banks which were noticed in the adjacent field to the north.

After lunch at the Garway Moon we drove to Tregate Castle to look at the motte. This has been reported before, but the 60yd diameter motte made an interesting contrast with the one just seen at Corras. The bailey is almost entirely obscured by the house, the road and the farm buildings. The terraces noted in the RCHM report to the southeast of the motte were thought to be most likely to be the result of landscaping for 18<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup> century gardens. The motte was probably the work of Robert son of Baderon, whose brother William fitz Baderon 'had charge' of Monmouth in Domesday. Robert is recorded in a charter of St Florent de Saumur as having given the church of St Roald of Treket (Llanrothal Church) to that Abbey.

The day's programme ended with just enough daylight to see the site of a chapel in the valley just below Old Grove in Llangarron parish (GR 522190). The ruins of the chapel were still visible early in this century but every piece of stone has now been removed, probably for building cottages in Llangrove. A striking example is the kitchen floor of the nearest cottage which has been paved with gravestones. The piscina and a broken slab from the site are now in the modern church of Llangrove. The chapel was marked as a ruin

on Isaac Taylor's map of 1754 where it was called Glynston chapel. It was called Glyston and Gluiston in the only other references I have found.

The site is almost circular and shaped like a bowl with a brook running across the middle. There is very little level ground and therefore the chapel must have been small. The parish boundary dividing Welsh Newton from Llangarron makes a semi-circle round the site, which obviously pre-dates it, suggesting that the building must have been an early Celtic chapel. The circular site occupies 2¼ acres and is still Vicarial glebe land. It is interesting to note how many of these early Celtic churches in Archenfield were sited in association with water, sometimes to such an extent that they had to be eventually abandoned because of flooding.

#### Historical note

1100: Harold, Lord of Ewyas gave to St Peter's of Gloucester the chapel of *St Kaene* with the chapel of *Caneros* etc. ( Dugdale, *Monasticon*, Vol 1, 147)

Not later than 1243 a grant of the manor of *Kaneros* was made by Ysenda, Lady of Kaneros. (Kentchurch Court Collection 1025)

**Mrs E Taylor  
February 1987**

#### **FIELD MEETING TO EWYAS HAROLD**

On Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> June 1986, members of the Archaeological Research Section and those of the Natural History Section joined forces for a field outing in Ewyas Harold.

In the morning Graham Sprackling led members in a walk around the village. A translated extract from the Cartulary of the Benedictine Priory of Ewyas Harold, was used to locate the sites of many of the vanished or hidden features of the medieval borough. Members also closely examined the tree covered motte of Ewyas Harold castle and decided that there were sufficient remains of the formerly massive foundations to merit further investigation. In the afternoon Mr. George Charnock led members on a walk across Ewyas Harold Common. Various features of botanical, historical and geographical interest were pointed out. Dr. Anthea Brian identified many interesting flowers, shrubs and trees.

**G Sprackling February 1987**

### **THE DOWARD AREA – A MEETING ON JUNE 28<sup>TH</sup>, 1985**

An expedition, comprising members of the Natural History and Archaeology sections, was led by Jo Hillaby in the Doward area. It covered aspects of its history, past land use and natural history. In good weather we walked from the valley between the Dowards in the area of Crease and Whitehead Limestone – a loose oolitic limestone with iron pockets which gave rise to the iron industry and the limestone workings of the past. Kilns were usually constructed in pairs. Some of these were visited together with a small quarry, now a Site of Special Scientific Interest because of its flora. Prior to the railway, coal was brought by river and then by muleback to these upper kilns – costing 2s a ton at the pithead and 9s at the kilns.

Other quarries visited had helleborines, orchids, red milkwort and rock rose with red valerian escapees. Woolhope botanists had identified 600 floral species by 1881 and a further 110 by 1905 but the whole area is now under threat from over-visiting and forestry policy and needs conservation. The huge Doward Quarry escaped use as a rubbish tip and is now owned by the Nature Trust but is still fairly bare awaiting colonisation by limestone flora. From the White Rocks Reserve, where mellilot, rock rose, kidney vetch, hop trefoil and black medick were seen, we descended along green lanes flanked by old coppice boundaries, through woods with huge coppiced beech stools and ventilation shafts from the haematite mines below, which honeycomb the area.

Descending to the Ferry Inn, the New Weir was visited after lunch. Prehistoric and Roman iron workings are known to be nearby. In 1542 the old weir was replaced but frost damage caused its collapse in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. It was again rebuilt with a landing stage and roadway to the new ironworks and a lock along the opposite bank. Part of the ironworks foundations, the weir base and slip road were visible despite the increased river height from the recent rainfall.