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The seal reproduced on the cover is that ascribed to the Town of Striguil (Chepstow), and dating perhaps from the late thirteenth century. (*Ashmolean Museum*).

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THE EARLY CHURCH IN GWENT, II: THE EARLY MEDIEVAL CHURCH

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A revised version of the Association's Public Lecture, given at Caerleon on October 26, 1991.

In his autobiography, Edward Gibbon described how the idea came to him of writing *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire.* 'It was in Rome', he tells us, 'on the 15th of October 1764, as I sat musing amid the ruins of the Capitol whilst the barefoot Friars were singing Vespers in the temple of Jupiter, that the idea of writing the decline and fall of the city first started to my mind[1]'. What he meant by the temple of Jupiter was the church of Santa Maria in Aracoeli on the Capitoline Hill, which antiquaries of the time thought stood directly on the site of the temple of Jupiter Capitolinus, the seat of Roman state religion. The image is a striking and memorable one, though had he known it, Gibbon could instead of going to Rome have listened to the vicar of Caerleon preaching a sermon within the *Principia* of the Second Augustan Legion. The way in which the church of St. Cadoc overlies the Roman Headquarters Building, where the legionary Eagle and standards were kept, and where statues of Roman Emperors were venerated is one that strikes many visitors to Caerleon. One could hardly ask for a clearer illustration of the way in which the authority of the Roman Empire was replaced by that of the Christian Church. Indeed, if I may be allowed a personal note, I think that the image is one that has had a powerful influence on the sorts of historical questions that I have tried to explore for much of my working life, if not quite from the day when, at the age of five, I was taken from this school across the road to the Legionary Museum.

Christian Origins and the Civitas Silurum

No one, so far as I know, has ever suggested that there was any direct continuity between the Roman Headquarters Building and the Church of St. Cadoc, or that the first Christians here took over a standing Roman building, as with, say, the Pantheon in Rome. Indeed, excavation makes it clear that the building was systematically demolished by the Romans themselves when they had no further need of it.[2] To underline what did *not* happen at Caerleon, one might cite other recent excavations at Aix-en-Provence in southern France. Here there was a forum and basilica similar in basic plan to that at Caerwent, or to the Caerleon *Principia.* It has a hall or Basilica for official business and a public piazza or Forum in front of it. At the end of the fifth century, the basilica was taken over as a Christian cathedral and the forum was dominated by a newly built baptistry, where crowds from all over the *Civitas* would assemble on the great feasts of the Church. The baptistry is still there, and so is the square, known today as the Place des Martyrs de la Resistance[3]. Closer to Caerleon is the situation at Lincoln, where the excavated church of St. Paul, seventh century at latest, stands within the central courtyard of the civic forum.[4] There were a number of reasons why it was convenient for an early church to stand within a large open courtyard, and this probably determined the siting of the first church at Caerleon rather than any concept of continuing authority.

We shall look later at the question, 'Who was St Cadoc?', and the reasons why a church dedicated to him might have stood in the centre of the legionary fortress. Last year, we heard from our Chairman a fine lecture on Roman Christianity in Britain.[5] And so I need only remind you that the earliest evidence for the Christian faith in what is now Wales comes from Caerleon and Caerwent. From Caerwent there is the fourth century pewter bowl with a chi-rho monogram cut on its base. From Caerleon there is the evidence for our two third century martyrs, Julius and Aaron. You will recall how the sixth century British writer Gildas spoke of the martyr shrines of St Alban at Verulamium and of Julius and Aaron at the City of the Legions: *Aaron et Iulium Legionis urbis*—and Caerleon has long been accepted as by far the most likely location for this. This can be confirmed in several ways, not least from the topographical evidence. Throughout the Roman Empire, the siting of martyrs' graves followed a very similar pattern. His (or her) body would be recovered by fellow Christians and buried in a cemetery outside the walls in the normal way. As we can see from the Roman pipe burial from Bulmore now across the road in the Legionary Museum,[6] it was common in the ancient world to celebrate the anniversary of the death of a member of the family with a sort of family feast or party at the graveside. The Christians adopted something of the same thing at the graves of the martyrs, though here the commemoration of what was sometimes called 'the heavenly birthday' involved the whole Christian family within that city. In time a *cella memoria* or grave chapel might be built over the grave, and in the course of time, this little grave chapel might be enlarged into a greater church, perhaps even a great abbey or a cathedral. St Peter's in Rome grew up in just this way, as did the cathedral of St Albans outside Roman Verulamium. In Germany, at the Roman Legionary fortress of Vetera, the Roman civil settlement shifted in the Middle Ages to the church over the graves of two other military martyrs, and in time became known as 'At the tombs of the Saints'—*Ad Sanctos* or Xanten.[7]

With this in mind, we can look at the evidence from Caerleon. In medieval times, the chapel of Julius and Aaron stood across the river from Caerleon alongside the road to Caerwent, on the fringe of the great Roman cemetery which has produced both the pipe burial and many of the Roman tombstones now in the Legionary Museum. A charter of about A.D. 864 in the Book of Llandaff, described by Professor Wendy Davies as 'an unquestionable account', records how three brothers, Wulferth, Hegoi and Arwystl, the sons of Beli, gave the *Territorium Sanctorum Martirum Iulii et Aaron* or the *Merthir Iun et Aaron* to bishop Nudd.[8] 'Merthir', from the latin *martyrium*, means a church or shrine containing the remains of a martyr, or, by extension, as for example at Merthyr Tydfil, of some other person regarded as holy. By the twelfth century, the chapel of Julius and Aaron had acquired a relic of St Alban of Verulamium, for it became known as the church of SS. Alban, Julius and Aaron, and later simply as 'St Alban's Chapel', perhaps under the influence of Geoffrey of Monmouth's probably baseless statement that Julius and Aaron had churches elsewhere in the Caerleon area.[9]

Our third piece of evidence, along with the topography and the ninth century charter is a fragment of a sculptured cross slab now in the National Musuem of Wales. We are poorly off in Monmouthshire for pre-Norman crosses and inscriptions. All that we have are three probably ninth century sculptured cross-slabs probably all by the same hand, from St Cadoc's church, Caerleon;[10] Bulmore,[11] and from St Arvan's church.[12] They are, from their style, the work of an immigrant sculptor from eastern Scotland and close examination might show that the distinctive bird headed angels from Caerleon and St Arvans had been

drawn from the same stencil. The Bulmore cross was presented to Caerleon Museum shortly before 1862 by a Mr Edmund Jones, on whose land it was presumably found. One side is very heavily worn, and its decoration largely obliterated. This, and its square shape, suggest that the surviving fragment had been re-used as paving. Its exact find spot is not recorded, but Bulmore is just downhill from the chapel of Julius and Aaron, and there is a good chance that it originally came from the martyrium.

We have evidence then, not only that Julius and Aaron were martyred at Caerleon, but that Christians continued to visit and venerate their tomb in the time of Gildas in the sixth century, and that by the ninth century at latest their martyr shrine outside Caerleon had a landed estate or *territorium*. It is indeed possible that the boundaries of this could correspond broadly with those of the medieval parish of Christchurch.[13]

From Venta to Guenta: The Framework of Rural Pastoral Care

Elsewhere in Wales, the picture is different. We have no firm evidence of Christian communities or belief in what is now Wales in Roman times outside Gwent. When our evidence for Welsh Christianity resumes in the late fifth century, it seems to be something quite new. The one hundred and fifty post-Roman inscriptions which are our primary archaeological evidence for how the Welsh became a literate and Christian people were studied by Dr V. E. Nash-Williams.[14] The earliest are probably the ogam stones, inscribed in the Irish language and in a home made alphabet. They are found both in southern Ireland, particularly the Cork-Waterford area, and in Dyfed—where we know from historical sources that Irish settles had established a kingdom.[15] The main series of inscriptions however are in latin, and Nash-Williams showed that the formulae used in them derived not from Roman Britain, but from fifth century Gaul.[16] They are mostly from west Wales, particularly from Pembrokeshire (with nearly forty stones), Carmarthenshire (with over twenty), and Gwynedd (with over forty). So far as Gwent is concerned, their significance is rather like that of Sherlock Holmes's dog that did not bark in the night. In this, the most solidly Romanized area of Wales, and the only one with firm evidence of Christianity in Roman times, there are none, and those in Glamorgan are late, about seventh century, as their lettering and texts show.[17] Though Romano-British Christianity almost certainly survived into early medieval times in Gwent and Glamorgan, this Gallic influenced post-Roman Christianity seen in the early memorial stones seems to be new, an affair of the unromanized west and north of Wales, where there is no evidence of Christianity in Roman times.

This new post-Roman Church in Wales and Ireland is what is sometimes referred to as "The Celtic Church" or "The Age of the Saints". Both phrases are now unfashionable among historians.[18] For one thing, it is illogical to refer to a Church whose liturgy and learning were all in latin by a linguistic term like "Celtic". Also, "Celtic church" suggests something which was not an integral part of western Christendom, which it was, but something eccentric and odd. To an older school of historians, the Welsh and Irish were people who celebrated Easter on the wrong date, whose monks had the wrong sort of haircut, and who had married clergy and lay abbots. Of course, the Celts made up for it by producing wonderful things like the Book of Kells or the Ardagh Chalice. They were puritanical and had married clergy like the Protestant Churches, and nineteenth century Welsh Nonconformists were happy to note that St David was a total abstainer, who drank only water.

One could say a great deal about many of these topics. The calculation of the date of Easter is a complicated business and there are different ways of working it out, which give different results. The Spanish Church for example sometimes failed to keep up with the latest method, but no one accused them of schism or unorthodoxy. Similarly, one could say much about married or even hereditary clergy in the Middle Ages, though it would need a lecture at least as long as this to tackle the matter properly. Suffice it to say that there was nothing specifically Welsh or Celtic about married clergy, though it sometimes suited people with axes to grind to pretend that there was.[19] The most important question is what sort of Church was there in Wales before the Norman conquest and how was it organized? What sorts of clergy and church buildings did it have? How did it go about the business of organizing pastoral care for the people of the Gwent countryside or of Wales?

One way of approaching these problems is to look at how the Church was organized in the rest of western Europe at this time. In France and Spain we have the minutes of Church councils, when bishops of one or more provinces met to debate a wide range of topics.[20] They list the different kinds of church, and the clergy who served them. Thus a council held at Clermont Ferrand in 535 ruled that priests who did not belong to the canon (list of clergy) of the city, or of the rural parishes, but lives in a villa (i.e. on a country estate) and celebrates divine service there, must celebrate Christmas, Easter, Pentecost and the other festivals with the bishop in his city.[21] One could cite a number of similar canons, but this is the most precise. There were then three types of clergy within a diocese—the priests of the cathedral and the city churches, those of the rural diocesan churches (what the Anglo-Saxons would come to call the Minsters), and those who served the churches built by private country landowners on their estates.

Words that we are familiar with today, like 'parish', 'diocese' and 'minster', were just coming into use at this time, but often had different meanings to their modern ones. A 'parish' was the area in the charge of a particular priest, just as we talk colloquially of someone's 'patch' or 'parish'. A bishop could have his parish (his see) just as any other priest might. A diocese was not a bishop's see, but the areas into which that see was divided, like a modern rural deanery. The Roman *civitas* was also subdivided into smaller areas called *pagi* or rural districts. That word is also still with us. A pagan meant originally a countryman or rustic, someone who lived in a rural *pagus* and clung to the old religion, not to the new city religion of Christianity. The greatest task of the Church was the conversion of the countryside and the provision of pastoral care for its *pagenses.*

This was achieved by the building of rural churches in the smaller country towns and settlements, each serving a much wider area than the later parish. They went under a variety of names in different parts of western Europe—"baptismal churches," because they early on took over that function from the city churches; *ecclesiae diocesanae* (diocesan churches), because each had a "diocese" about the size of a medieval rural deanery; "mother churches", because in time each came to have a number of dependent daughter churches.[22] They each had a group of clergy (often married) under an archpriest and the Welsh came to call them *clas* churches, because of their *clas* or community of canons. The Anglo-Saxons called them Ministers, from the latin *monasterium,* because they seemed to them like a monastery, though there is a marked distinction between a secular canon (from the latin *saeculum,* the world) who moved in the world preaching and baptising, and a celibate monk who lived in a community under an abbot, did not usually have the cure of souls, and indeed might not even be a priest. This is perhaps the pattern we should be

looking for in our earliest Gwent or Welsh churches. It is also the pattern that we find in the sixth century British writer Gildas. Gildas may even have been writing in our area, for he knew of the shrine of Julius and Aaron and his Gospel book and bell were later kept on Flatholm, and later still at Llancarfan in the Vale of Glamorgan.[23] Gildas mentions bishops, presbyters or priests, and abbots and monks, though monks were still only a small minority within the Church, a small élite like say the later Jesuits. Most clergy of his day seem however to have been married, for he parodies the rulings of a number of church councils on the subject of married clergy.[24] These were presumably the canons in the minsters, married like their Gallic counterparts.

One final element should be mentioned before we go in search of our first Gwent churches. The church lived in the world. It was dependent on rulers and landowners for the endowments which enabled it to build churches and maintain clergy. Its own organisation often mirrored that of secular society. Throughout England and Wales the minster parishes often corresponded with secular areas of lordship called Hundreds in England, or Cantrefi ('Hundred households') and Commotes in Wales. We do not know how ancient this arrangement was, for our evidence for individual cantrefs and hundreds is usually late and, in the form in which we know them, they may be the result of administrative change and tidying up between the tenth and the twelfth centuries. Nevertheless, Anglo-Saxon historians have suggested that units like the "seven hundreds of Cookham and Bray" in Berkshire may represent political units going back to the time of the English settlements.[25] Twelfth century historians explained the cantrefs of Glywysing (the later Glamorgan) in mythological terms, as deriving their names from the sons of its eponym or ancestor figure Glywys, who in turn gave their names to individual cantrefs, including Gwynllyw of Gwynlliog and Etelic of Etellicon (Edlogan).[26] Gwent itself is not mentioned, either because it has a separate origin story, or because it was already in the hands of the Normans when the account was written. It would seem though that Glywysing was an early *regio* or petty kingdom like those of the early Saxon kingdoms. As we have seen, the ecclesiastical counterpart of the Hundred or Cantref was the medieval Rural Deanery. In medieval times, Gwent was divided into the four rural deaneries of Netherwent, corresponding to Gwent Is Coed; Usk, perhaps corresponding in part to Edlogan: Abergavenny, corresponding to Gwent Uwch Coed; and Newport, corresponding to Gwynlliog.[27] To what extent can we identify minster or mother churches corresponding to these secular units?

Church and King: Early Secular and Religious Centres in Gwent

1. Gwent Is-Coed and Caerwent

The first historian of Gwent was an anonymous clergyman, possibly a monk of Gloucester, who wrote the lives of two Gwent saints—St Gwynllyw of Newport (St Woolos), whose church (the present cathedral) had been given by the Norman conquerors to St Peter's Abbey at Gloucester (now Gloucester Cathedral), and St Tatheus of Caerwent.[28] What he has to say about both places is extremely interesting. At Caerwent, the Roman town of *Venta Silurum* was, when Tatheus landed at Portskewett from Ireland, the seat of the king of Gwent, Caradoc ap Ynyr or Caradoc Vreichvras. Following a miracle, King Caradoc moved out of the Roman walled town to make way for St Tatheus and his clergy:

Map 1.
Gwent: Rural Deaneries
and major Early Churches.

"This miracle being seen, the king granted to St Tatheus all the city, and its territory, for a perpetual inheritance. Also . . . he asked St Tatheus that they should ride out tomorrow and show him a place for . . . a royal palace. Very early in the morning he mounted his horse and without bridle or halter let him go wherever God might lead him . . . until he nearly came to the bank of the Severn. When he arrived there, the horse stood with his feet fixed in a golden fetter. Though he was urged, he went no further. Looking at the horse he (Tatheus) said:

See the sign from God; the horse stands; here is the place to live,
So he tells you to build, and here shall be your royal seat.

The place pleased king Caradoc; if only a spring of water had been there, for those who lived there . . . the horse scratched the earth with his feet, the dry soil brought forth water, clear spring water like a vein in the arm."[29]

The story of the site for a church being chosen in this way is a common one. A similar story is told, for example, of Durham Cathedral. It is a hagiographical commmonplace, a story that might be told of many saints. Yet I have deliberately called the man who wrote it an historian; our first Gwent historian. One might almost call him our first Gwentian field archaeologist. He is doing what every historian does. He takes evidence from written sources, or, particularly if those are lacking, from the field evidence, and uses it to reconstruct past events. Even if his model of the past was in our view mistaken, we can use his evidence, and re-interpret it. He does not describe the ruins of Roman Caerwent as Giraldus Cambrensis described those of Caerleon, but the Roman walls and probably traces of the buildings inside them would have been visible in his day. It had once been an

important place (he would have reasoned), no doubt the seat of the local ruler. Yet now there was only the church of St Tatheus, whilst a few miles away was a place which had been the royal seat or *llys* of the kings of Gwent. The traditional founder of Gwent, Caradoc ap Ynyr, must therefore have given the town to Tatheus and moved out.

There is one reference in the life to Tatheus's "twelve canons",[30] which would imply that the church was a *clas* church or minster. Unfortunately, this is probably an editorial insertion into the text at a late stage, for it conflicts with other references to his seven or eight 'disciples', (the confusion of the latter is of course an easy one to make with latin numerals), and similar formulaic phrases involving a bishop of Llandaff and an oratory of the Holy Trinity are found in other lives from the same school of writers.[31] However, there was presumably a corporate body at Caerwent able to commission the life, and the "five priests of Caerwent" (*presbyteri Tathiu*), whose names are given, who witness a Llandaff charter of shortly before 1063 confirm this.[32] The life itself implies that it was to be read publicly on the saint's feast day to the body of people able to understand its latin—presumably clergy.[33]

Caerwent then was a class or minster church, not far from the royal seat of the kings of Gwent. The latter was somewhere between Caerwent and the Severn, close to a good spring of water. We may find a clue to its location in an unlikely place—the *Anglo Saxon Chronicle,* in an episode of 1065:—

"In that year, Earl Harold (Godwinson) had building started at Potskewett in Wales . . . thinking to invite king Edward (the Confessor) there for the hunting . . . (but) . . . Caradoc ap Gruffydd (the king of Gwent) came there . . . slew most of the workmen and carried off all the moveables . . . This slaughter took place on St Bartholomew's Day" (24 August).[34]

Portskewett (*Porth Is Coed— "the Port in Gwent Is Coed"*)was quite a famous place. A Welsh triad, twelfth century in its present form, but possibly, according to Rachel Bromwich, containing much older elements, calls it "one of the three chief ports of the Island of Britain" (which it certainly was not by Norman or later times), and a Welsh poem, *Moliant Cadwallon,* perhaps as old as the seventh century, refers to it as *"beautiful Porth Esgewin, the estuary on the border".*[35] Praise of this kind was usually reserved for the seat of a lord or patron and may confirm Portskewett as a place of high status. In medieval Wales, the equivalent of "from John O'Groats to Lands End" was from Amlwch in Anglesey to Portskewett. Today, it has a small but fine early Norman church and a complex of unexcavated earthworks known as "Harold's Palace" in the field next to the church.[36] Harold may have built his hunting lodge on the *llys* of the kings of Gwent. The clinching evidence would be if we could find the spring, and here is Archdeacon Coxe at Portskewett in 1798:—

"On quitting the Inne of the New Passage, I rode through the village of Portscwit, leaving the church, a small gothic building, on the left, near which a transparent rill bursts from the ground with a considerable body of water, and after forming a large pool, runs into the Severn.[37]

The pool is no longer there, having disappeared when the Severn Tunnel was built, but I think we have found our royal palace. It was well placed to exploit a wide range of natural resources on the wetlands and meadow of the Gwent levels, the belt of good arable land in its immediate vicinity, and the woods to the north. Unlike Caerwent, it had easy maritime contact with the outside world, for the Nedern Brook, which now runs through Caldicot, originally ran further west, close to Portskewett.[38]

Caerwent itself has two post-Roman cemeteries with radio-carbon dates of the fifth to ninth centuries, one outside the walls in the proper Roman manner, the other around the church.[39] There is also post-Roman metalwork to show that the site was not wholly

deserted.[40] Though there is clearly no earlier written source behind the life, if its core tradition does contain an historical element, the natural context for this would be not the fifth century (the assumed date of Caradoc ap Vreichvras), but the seventh. This is the time when Irish *peregrini* are found through most of western Europe, and, as John Blair has recently pointed out, many Roman forts and small towns in Britain were granted by Anglo-Saxon kings to immigrant bishops and monks, often Irish or Frankish, in the course of the century.[41] However, Tatheus can hardly have been a missionary priest, like (say) St Felix, who was given the Roman fort of Burgh Castle by King Sigeberht of East Anglia about 630, for the radio-carbon dates show that a presumably Christian community had been burying at Caerwent for several centuries by this time. All the occupants of these two large cemeteries are unlikely to have lived in Caerwent itself, and it may have served as a place of burial for a sizeable surrounding area.

Caerwent also appears in a charter in the Book of Llandaff describing events of A.D. 955, which Wendy Davies emphasises must have been written shortly afterwards.[42] A deacon, Eli, guilty of murder, took refuge in the *ecclesia Iarmen et Febric,* the church of St Arvans. The affair is sorted out by bishop Pater at *Guentonia Urbs* or Caerwent. We do not know where Pater was bishop, but he is associated with Trellech Grange, Caerwent and St Arvans, and was presumably bishop in, if not of, Gwent[43] There are other charter references to Caerwent from *c.* 950 on[44] and three Anglo-Saxon pence, of Eadmund (939-946), Aethelraed II (of *c.* 991-8) and Harthacnut (1040-42).[45] Such coin finds, which are not numerous, even in England, tend in Wales to occur on major ecclesiastical sites, and confirm the charter evidence that the Roman town was an occupied site of some status, secular or ecclesiastical, from at latest the mid-tenth century. There were other important churches in Gwent-Is-Coed, like St Arvans, which has, apart from the 955 charter one of our three Gwent group ninth century cross slabs, or the now vanished St Kynemark's near Chepstow, in medieval times a miniscule house of Augustinian canons,[46] suggesting a possible reformed pre-conquest community, but our evidence suggests that Caerwent and Portskewett were the ecclesiastical centre and the secular *llys* or *villa regalis* of Gwent Is Coed.

The *llys* or court would be the centre for justice and administration, and the place to which the peasants and the clients of the king would bring their food rents of sesters of honey, loaves of bread, barrels of beer, oxen and pigs.[47] The pairing of mother church and royal court was quite common and a king would be ruler not of one cantref and its court, but of a group, and with his followers would progress around the different cantrefi, consuming the food rents and holding court. Thus, as late as the mid-eleventh century, the Book of Llandaff described how "*When king William conquered England . . . there reigned Catgucan son of king Mouric in Glamorgan . . . King Caradog . . . in Ystradyu, Gwent Uwch Coed and Gwynlliog, but Rhydderch in Ewyas and Gwent Is Coed, which . . . kings were subject to King William, and in his reign they died.*[48] We have seen how the late eleventh century life of St Cadoc explains the origin of the kingdom of Glwysing (Glamorgan) in terms of a king Glywys, whose ten sons divided its cantrefs among themselves, often giving them their names like Gwynllyw of Gwynlliog, Gurai of Gorfynydd, Mar of Margam and so on.[49] This is basically a piece of scholarly reconstruction, and also a political document setting out the claim of the perceived heirs of Glywys to rule in Glamorgan.

Several *cantrefi* show a pairing of mother church or minster and royal court. Llanilltud Fawr (Llantwit Major) in the Vale of Glamorgan was, for example, within Gorfynydd. The large Roman villa there would have been the centre of an estate which would have included

much of the prime cornland of the Vale. Whether that estate survived in any form into early medieval times is unknown, but the huge medieval parish of Llanilltud included both Llantwit Major itself, site of one of the most renowned early Welsh monasteries, founded by St Illtyd with abbots attested from the mid-seventh century onwards, and Llysworney, the *llys,* as its name tells us, of Gorfynydd.[50] The church at Llantwit houses a number of sculptured crosses with inscriptions naming early kings of Glamorgan, including Hywel ap Rhys, a contemporary of King Alfred.[51]

2.: Gwynlliog, St. Gwynllyw and Bassaleg

In Gwynlliog, west of the Usk, the life of Gwynllyw tells of a series of posthumous miracles of the saint, set in the eleventh century. His church was served by a community of priests or canons and held the grave of their patron.[52] This was the chapel of St Mary, between the present west tower and nave, and was an *Eglwys Y Bedd* or grave chapel. There is a similar one attached to the west end of Partrishow, over the grave of St Issau.[53] When St Gwynllyw's church was granted to St Peter's Abbey, Gloucester, after the Norman conquest, a priest named Picot, a chaplain of the earl of Gloucester, disputed the grant, claiming to hold the church by monastic right (*monacatu*), as heir to the pre-Norman canons. Picot, a Frenchman by the sound of him, duly appears in the life, which was written to support Gloucester's claim, in the guise of Ednywain of Gwynedd, who improperly ocupied the church dressed as a priest, and was divinely punished with feeble mindedness.[54]

St Gwynllyw's then was clearly an important early minster, dedicated to the person after whom the cantref was named, whose body it held, and wealthy enough for a major English Benedictine Abbey to engage in a lengthy and no doubt costly dispute when its ownership was challenged. Yet it was not St Gwynllyw's which was the mother church of the cantref, but Bassaleg.

Bassaleg is a church whose history we shall need to unravel. It original dedication had been lost by 1146, when the present dedication of St Basil, a bad guess from the place name, appears.[55] It is, as has long been realised, from the latin *basilica.*[56] The church stands at the point where the Roman road from Caerleon to Cardiff crossed the Ebbw, probably by a bridge, for the *pontis de Basselech* was already there by the twelfth century.[57] In the sixteenth century, John Leland wrote how *"There is a bridge of timber over Ebowith caullid Pont Bassaleg . . . and over this bridge lyith the highway from Newport to Cairtaphe"*[58] There is no need to look for a Roman building at Bassaleg, for the Irish scholar Charles Doherty has shown that basilica was used in very early times in Ireland for a particularly important church which has the bones of its patron or other major relics.[59] Like St Gwynllyw's, Bassaleg seems to have had an *Eglwys Y Bedd* or grave chapel, in which these relics would have lain. Such grave chapels were not uncommon in Wales.[60] The Bassaleg example appears in Colt Hoare's drawing of Bassaleg in Coxe's *Tour,* and Sir Stephen Glynne wrote that *"on the south side of the church, and quite detached, is a small Perpendicular chapel of plain character, with an east window of three lights and the roof ribbed in the shape of an arch.*[61] Its obituary appeared in *Archaeologia Cambrensis* in 1859:" *A small isolated chapel of Perpendicular architecture, standing in the churchyard . . . has lately been destroyed . . . It has been used as a school.*[62] Here then was the basilica or church of the relics.

Whose relics lay there appears from the *Life of St Gwynllyw.* This, written for the monks of Gloucester, is concerned with the status and property of his church, which belonged to them, not with other local churches, particularly if, like Bassaleg, they belonged to someone

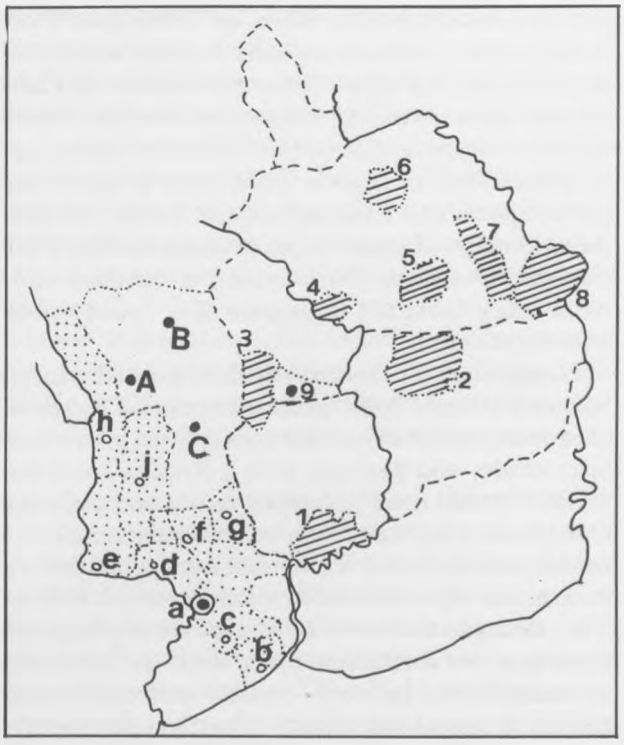
else, in this case Glastonbury. Yet the *Life* has much about St Gwladys, wife of Gwynllyw, whom it treats with great respect: *"Gwladys, his most noble wife . . . though equally devoted to religion, was unwilling to remain near the dwelling place of Gwynllyw . . . She came to the bank of the Ebbw, where she dwelt, building what was necessary, two buildings, for God and for man".*[63] This was standard phrase for the building of a church and I think there can be little doubt that Gwladys was the lost patron of Bassaleg, and that it was her bones which lay in the *Eglwys Y Bedd.* There was however a second chapel of St Gwladys on the Ebbw, for the accord of 1146 between 'the monks of Bassalach' and Picot defining the boundaries of their two parishes (which suggests that previously the two had been parts of the same *parrochia*) mentions a *"chapel of St Gladewis, which Laudomer built upon the River Ebbw."*[64] Some nineteenth century antiquaries took this to be St Gwladys's foundation mentioned in the *Vita Gundleii,*[65] but it was clearly a recent foundation and it is difficult to believe that the patron of a church with such wide properties as Bassaleg would vanish wholly without trace, or to explain the relationship between the two churches save on the assumption that Gwladys was the lost patron of Bassaleg.

Thus by the twelfth century we have two major minster churches within two miles of each other. Yet it was Bassaleg which was the mother church of Gwynlliog. This suggests that it was the older foundation, perhaps supplanted by St Gwynllyw's because of the latter's association with the secular ancestor figure of the cantref, who perhaps embodied the political legitimacy of its rulers. The *parochia* of Bassaleg survived into the thirteenth century, when its churches were listed in a document of 1230-40:—

"Transfer by abbot Michael and the convent of Glastonbury to Elias bishop of Llandaff . . . of the church of Bassaleg, the chapels of Magheyn, Bedewas, Menethistelon, Risca, Henthles, St Brides and Koytherneu, with the advowsons of these chappels and of all lands, tithes, mills, and rents which the abbot held in the diocese of Llandaff . . . by a perpetual farm (rent) of 35 marks, payable half yearly at Keynsham."[66] All these extensive parishes were no more than chapelries of the minister parish of Bassaleg and as late as 1291 the greater part of the Deanery of Newport is summed up in the taxation return as "Bassalec cu(m) capell".[67] By this time however, such minster parishes were archaic survivals from the past. Over the preceding centuries, enormous numbers of churches had been built by landowners on their estates through much of western Europe, and the parochial system as we know it had come into being. The minster parishes were replaced by smaller units serving a single village or community and founded by the landowners of those estates. We shall look at the beginnings of that pattern in Gwent later.

3: Eteliccon and St Cybi

The principal church of Edlogan was that of St Cybi at Llangybi. Cybi was the saint of Caer Gybi at Holyhead on Anglesey where his church and *Eglwys y Bedd* stand within the walls of the late Roman fort.[68] How he came to be venerated in Gwent is obscure, but the *Vespasian AXIV* manuscript which contains the lives of Tatheus and Gwynllyw has two versions of his *Vita,* in folios 86-88 and 94-96.[69] We can call them, for convenience, the A and B versions respectively. B is simply a revision of A by the Anglo-Norman author of the manuscript. It leaves out the story of Merthyr Casso (Llangaffo) in Anglesey, which meant little to the south Walian or Gloucester writer and it glosses Gwynedd with *"que Anglice Snaudune nuncuptur"* (*"which in English is called Snowdon"*). A, its immediate prototype, consists of three imperfectly welded sections. The first (cc. 1-8) deals with the Gwent Saint, the second (cc. 9-15) is a lengthy Irish interlude and the third (cc. 15-20) concerns Anglesey



Map 2. Gwent: Bassaleg and her daughters, and parishes with Cadoc dedications:—*Cadoc dedications* (shaded).
1. Caerleon, 2. Raglan, 3. Trevethin, 4. Llangattock nigh Usk, 5. Penrhos, 6. Llangattock Lingoed, 7. Llangattock Vibon Avel, 8. Monmouth, (9-Mamhilad). *Bassaleg and her daughters:*—(stippled) a. Bassaleg, b. St. Brides Wentloog, c. Coedkernew, d. Machen, e. Bedwas, f. Risca, g. Henllys, h. Bedwellty, j. Mynyddislwyn, A. Manmoel, B. Aberystwyth, C. Llanhilleth.

and Caer Gybi. The last is the original core of the work, intended for reading at Caer Gybi on his feast day, as the final liturgical chapter shows. Traces of an earlier manuscript show through in the obviously incomplete and truncated version of the story of St Casso of Llangaffo and in the way in which a block of text in chapter 7 (the end of the story of St Casso) has been copied in the wrong place (one suspects a leaf loose in the original manuscript). Someone later tacked on to the front of this some stories taken from a volume of Irish saints lives which he thought, rightly or wrongly, to refer to St Cybi, and finally the first section was added.

It is this first section which is our concern. It is a very typical saint's life of the school of Caradoc of Llancarfan, or of our Gwentian writer. It tells of the Cornish birth and ancestry of St Cybi, his education and visits to Jerusalem and Poitiers. Refusing the crown of Cornwall, he came to Edelygion in the time of its eponym king Ethelig who grants him, following a miracle, the churches of Lankebi and Llandauerguir (Llandegveth) *"wherein he left his small parti-coloured finger bell"*[70] The shape of the parishes of Llangybi and Llandegveth strongly suggest that they once formed a single unit, and it is odd that Cybi should have left his bell not at his own church, but at Llandegveth. One suspects that Llandegveth may have been the older or original ecclesiastical centre of the estate, for a Llandaff charter dated by Wendy Davies to abour 750 records the grant of *Merthir Tecmed* to bishop Tyrchan.[71]

We have already noted now the latin *martyrium* developed in meaning from graves of Roman martyrs like Julius and Aaron to the graves of persons with a particular reputation for holiness or sanctity, and, as *Merthir,* to the cemetery or enclosure in which such a person lay. There are indications that such place-names, usually compounded with the name of the

person whose grave lay there, as in Merthyr Tydfil, Merthir Tecmed or Merthir Maches (Llanvaches), form a very early stratum within the Welsh church.[72] Several, as at Merthyr (Carmarthen), Mathry (Pembrokeshire), and Merthyr Mawr (Glam.) have sixth-seventh century latin memorial stones and Merthyr Tydfil (Glamorgan) an inscribed cross slab of eighth or ninth century date.[73] *Merthir Tecmed,* as we have seen, is mentioned in a charter of about 750. A further indication of their early origin is that in some cases, as at Llandegveth and Llanvaches, the *merthyr* element evidently became obsolete at an early date, its original significance perhaps having been forgotten, and was replaced by *Llan.* By the twelfth century, the meaning of the term had become so forgotten that tales or myths were being invented to explain the "martyrdoms" of the people whose names were so commemorated.[74]

Llangybi and Llandegveth then formed a large unit of territory (one is tempted to say 'estate') of some 2,400 hectares bounded by the Usk, the Dowlais and Sôr brooks, and by an unnamed stream on the south. Llangybi's association with the Norman ringwork and later castle, and perhaps with a Roman road from Usk to Caerleon via Helmaen (*'Heol Maen'*—'stone road'), suggest that it was the *caput* of this unit by the time of the Norman Conquest. If Llandegveth was its earlier centre, we have no indication when the shift in status took place, but it may well have coincided with the dedication of the church of the new centre, perhaps founded by a landowner with links to Gwynedd or access to a relic of Cybi. This example can serve to remind us of a basic point about the distribution of our Gwent churches. We are looking not at a series of spiritual or ecclesiastical foundations *in vacuo,* but at churches built to serve secular settlements, usually by the secular landowner, and will therefore reveal something of settlement patterns at the time those churches were first founded.

Further east in the same deanery is another area needing further study. Trellech and its satellite of Trellech Grange cover a large area of the Trellech uplands. With a parish of this size, one would normally be looking for evidence of an early minster church, yet the dedication of Trellech church is to St Nicholas, and therefore no earlier than the twelfth or early thirteenth century.[75] As at Grosmont, another Nicholas dedication, the associations with a medieval castle suggests an Anglo-Norman manorial foundation. Was there therefore an earlier ecclesiastical centre for this area? Llandogo is the obvious candidate, the neighbouring church of an important Welsh saint with his own written life,[76] yet in 1921, *Llanthogo* was in the deanery of Gwent Is Coed, not that of Usk, and the problem requires more work.

Gwent Uwch Coed, St Cadoc and the Origins of the Gwent Parishes

Medieval churches were dedicated to God under the invocation of a particular saint. Some were dedicated to the universal saints of western Christendom, like St Peter at Llanbedr or Peterston, St Mary at Llanvair Discoed or Llanfair Kilgeddin, or St Michael at the various Llanvihangels. Others were dedicated to the monastic saints of the great monasteries which came to dominate the Welsh and Irish Churches from the sixth century onwards, for example St Illtyd of Llanilltyd Fawr (Llantwit Major); St Teilo of Llandeilo Fawr in Carmarthenshire or Cadoc, whose principal monastery was at Llancarfan in the Vale of Glamorgan.[77] Of about 1,500 ancient church dedications in Wales, almost exactly half (about 750) are to persons with linguistically Celtic names,[78] many, perhaps most, the patron of a single church.

The dedications to Cadoc show two interesting features.[79] One is their association with Roman sites and Roman forts, as at Caerleon, Neath, Gelligaer, or Monmouth, where there was a chapel of St Cadoc at the castle.[80] The other is their overall distribution, for they fall into two distinct clusters, one around Llancarfan, the other in Gwent Uwch Coed (*'Gwent above the woods'*). As Canon E. T. Davies pointed out,[81] there are no Cadoc dedications in Gwynlliog or in Gwent Is Coed, which was the territory of St Tatheus and his church at Caerwent. There may have been a second monastic centre in northern Gwent, part of the monastic federation of Llancarfan, for when Glamorgan was ravaged by Eilaf, a Count of King Canute in 1022, the monks of Llancarfan fled with the shrine and relics to Cadoc to Mamhilad (*''usque ad Mammeliat locum''*).[82] Since *locus* (''place'') is often used to mean 'monastery', this can either be translated ''to the place called Mamhilad'' or, (as does Wade Evans)[83] ''to the monastery of M.''. The present dedication of Mamhilad is to St Illtyd, though the adjacent parish of Trevethin is a Cadoc church. It would seem likely that the monks of Cadoc would have fled to another church or estate within their monastic *parochia*.

The *Life of Cadoc* also tells how he built a church for his disciple Macmoil (Manmoel, on the ridge between the Ebbw and the Sirhowy), surrounded it with a *vallum* or rampart and made Macmoil its prior.[84] Decoded, this means that a saint with the Irish name of Mac Moel had founded a church long ago, to which Llancarfan now laid claim. The passage is cast in the form of a charter, and talks about the land and possessions of the church. The exact site of Manmoel church seems to be lost,[85] and this area of north Gwent presents particular difficulties. The creation of industrial parishes such as Ebbw Vale and Blaenavon in the nineteenth century has blurred, if not erased, the medieval parochial pattern. Whilst Trevethin and Mamhilad appear regularly in medieval lists of the churches of Abergavenny deanery, Aberystwyth, Llanhilleth and Manmoel are absent from all lists, and it is not clear to which deanery they belonged.[86] However, they are consistently absent from the lists of churches belonging to the minster parish of Bassaleg, and were presumably outside it. Since their area must include the lands and possessions of Manmoel referred to in the pseudo-charter, they perhaps formed a separate minster *parochia*. The present dedication of Llanhilleth is to St Illtyd, and there seems to be no evidence that Llancarfan ever made good its claim to the area.

On Fig 2, I have mapped the dedications to Cadoc in Gwent. In place of the traditional dots of the distribution map, I have shown the areas of the present parishes with a church dedicated to him. This is partly to emphasise that we are looking at the distribution of secular settlements, and of the estates and churches associated with them. The distribution within Gwent uwch Coed (the deaneries of Usk and Abergavenny) is clear. What is not is why landowners in this area had their churches dedicated to Cadoc, and Professor Emrys Bowen, from whose seminal work any study of these problems must stem, thought that such foundations were the result of direct missionary activity by the saint in question, or by an immediate follower, in the fifth or sixth century[88]. Others have preferred to see the result of the much later influence and property rights of the monastic confederation of (in this case) Llancarfan.[89]

This is part of the wider and difficult problem of the date at which our Gwent parish churches first came into being. Wendy Davies has, on charter evidence, suggested an already dense pattern of churches in the area by the seventh century,[90] but a considerable body of both historical and archaeological evidence suggests that the parochial pattern as we

know it did not begin to develop in its present form before the tenth century.[91] Our few excavated Welsh church sites confirm that stone churches were probably very rare in Wales before Anglo-Norman times.[92] There is no room here to try to resolve this problem, but the obvious answer is that certain classes of church, like some of those discussed above, the *merthyr* churches and monastic dedications like Llangattock or Llangybi were already in place before the development of the full medieval pattern.

A particular problem is the identity and date of people like Henwg of Llanhennock, Llywel of Llanllowel or Ffwyst of Llanfoist, who gave their names to a single church. In a few cases, there is confusion between *Llan* (a church) and *Nant* (a river valley), as at Llantarnam (Nant Teyrnion, after an old name of the Afon Llwyd) or Llanthony in the Honddu valley. Of the rest, some at least could go back to the early stratum of churches whose possible existence we glimpsed earlier, but two eleventh century lists of Kentish churches list a number named after Saxon thegns, presumably still alive, or figures from the recent past—Ordmaere's circe, Dodes circe, or Deremannes circe.[93] In some cases at least, the people who gave their names to our Gwent villages may not have been monks or hermits from an "Age of the Saints", but landowners, laymen and laywomen, with no especial claim to sanctity, who provided the land and resources for a church on their estate.

The pattern of parish churches was largely complete by about 1150. Some time between 1165 and 1183, bishop Nicholas of Llandaff and Lady Margaret de Bohun built a chapel at Crick 'in the parish of Caerwent', with the consent of the rector, who was to say mass there once a week. The rights of the 'mother church' were carefully safeguarded in the charter, and Crick never became a separate parish.[94] There were a few exceptions. In a few cases, churches which do not appear in our thirteenth century lists of parishes may still have been amalgamated with a neighbour.[95] and we have one late example of the formation of something approaching a new parish. In many large upland parishes, bodies were carried many miles over moorland tracks marked out by centuries of such use to burial in the parish church. What this meant in practice is shown by a petition to the Pope in 1441.[96] St Sannan's church at Bedwellty had existed for some centuries, as its thirteenth century nave arcade testifies. It was a daughter of Mynyddislwyn, whose people, on account of the great distance between those places, the breaking of bridges and other hindrances, especially in winter, could not go there, nor could the chaplain of Mynyddislwyn come to them, and the bishop of Llandaff had therefore agreed that they could have their own priest. It was a situation that must have occurred scores of times in earlier centuries, and the end result was the pattern of parish churches in the Gwent countryside with which we are all familiar.

NOTES

[1] Smeaton, O (ed.)., *Edward Gibbon: Autobiography* (Everyman's Library London: 1911) 124. There are several differing manuscript versions by Gibbon. The above is the usual and familiar one, but the standard edition: Bonnard, G. A. (ed.)., *Edward Gibbon: Memoirs of My Life (London, 1966)* uses *(p. 136)* (another, citing the above as a variant.)

[2] Boon, G. C., 'Excavations on the site of the Basilica Principiorum at Caerleon, 1968-9', *Arch. Camb.* CXIX (1970) 10-63.

[3] Guild, J., Guyon, J. and Rivet, L., 'Les origines du baptistère de la cathédrale Saint-Sauveur. Étude de topographie aixoise', *Rev. Arch. de Narbonnaise* 16 (1983) 171-232.

[4] For an illustration, see: Blair, J. and Sharpe, R (ed.)., *Pastoral Care Before the Parish* (Leicester U. P., 1992) Fig. 10/6, p. 244.

[5] Boon, G. C., 'The Early Church in Gwent, I: The Romano-British Church', *Monm. Antiq.* VIII (1992) 11-24.

[6] Wheeler, R. E. M., 'A Roman Pipe-Burial', *Antiq. Jnl.* IX (1929) 1-7.

[7] Radford. C. A. Ralegh., 'The archaeological background on the Continent' in Barley, M. W., and Hanson, R. P. C. (ed.), *Christianity in Britain, 300-700* (Leicester U. P., 1968) 32-3. Recent work has made important revisions to the chronology and intepretation of this sequence, see: Bridger, C., 'Die Frühgeschichte Xanten', *Archäelogie In Deutschland* 1990: 1 (Jan.-March) 8-11.

[8] Evans, J. G. and Rhys, J (ed.)., *Text of the Book of Llan Dav* (Oxford, 1893) 225; Davies, Wendy., *The Llandaff Charters* (NLW, Aberystwyth; 1979) No. 225, p.121.

[9] Levison, W., 'St. Alban and St Albans', *Antiquity* 16 (1941) 337-59.

[10] Longueville Jones, H., 'Monumental Stones, Caerleon', *Arch. Camb.* 1856, 11; Lee, J. E., *Isca Silurum* (London, 1862) 111-2, Pl. XLIV-3; Nash-Williams, V. E., *The Early Christian Monuments of Wales* (Cardiff, 1950) No. 291.

[11] Lee, op. cit. 111, Pl. XLIV: 1; Nash-Williams, op. cit. No. 290.

[12] Nash-Williams, op. cit. No. 292, and 'Welsh Early Christian Monuments', *Antiq. Jnl. XIX* (1939) 150-2.

[13] Boon, *Early Church in Gwent,* op. cit. 21-2 (n. 10); Evans and Rhys, op. cit. 225, 377.

[14] Nash-Williams, *Early Christian Monuments,* op. cit. For a recent reappraisal, see: Knight, J. K., 'The Early Christian latin inscriptions of Britain and Gaul: Chronology and context', and Dark, K. R., 'Epigraphic, art-historical and historical approaches to the chronology of Class I inscribed stones', both in: Edwards, N. and Lane, A (ed.) *The Early Church in Wales and the West* (Oxbow Monograph, 16; 1992) 45-61.

[15] Thomas, C., *And Shall Those Mute Stones Speak: Dyfed and Dumnonia* (Univ. of Wales Press, forthcoming).

[16] Nash-Williams, *Early Christian Monuments* and Knight, op. cit.

[17] Knight, J. K., 'Glamorgan, A. D. 400-1100: Archaeology and History', in Savory, H.N. (ed.)., *Glamorgan County History 2* (Cardiff, 1984).

[18] Hughes, Kathleen., 'The Celtic Church: is this a valid concept?', *Cambridge Medieval Celtic Studies I* (1981) 1-20; Davies, Wendy, 'The Myth of the Celtic Church'in Edwards and Lane (op. cit) 12-21.

[19] For a characteristic example, see: Colvin, H. M., *The White Canons in England* (Oxford, 1951) 237-8. Edward I's letter to the Pope complaining that the Premonstratensian canons of Talley Abbey were, in effect, married (*i.e.* : co-habiting openly in a socially accepted relationship) is explained by his proposed remedy of replacing them with 'others, of the English tongue'. I owe to Canon Wyn Evans the suggestion that the canons of Talley may have represented in some way a continuation of the pre-Norman *clas* community of Llandeilo Fawr.

[20] On the Gallic Church Councils, see: Munier, C (ed.) *Concilia Galliae, 314-506* (*Corpus Christianorum,* Series Latina, 148; Turnhout, 1963); and Clercq, C. de. *Concilia Galliae,* 511-695 (ibid. 148A, Turnhout, 1963).

[21] Clercq, C., op. cit. 108-9.

[22] There is now a large and growing literature on this topic. For an important collection of recent essays, see: Blair and Sharpe, op. cit.

[23] Williams, H. (ed.)., 'Caradoc of Llancarfan: *Vita Gildae* (*Cymm. Rec. Ser. 3,* 1889) 107-10; Wade-Evans, A., *'Vita Cadoci'* in *Vitae Sanctorum Britanniae et Genealogiae* (Cardiff; U. W. P., 1944) 85-7, 96-7.

[24] Knight (1984) op. cit. 399-42.

[25] On the origins of the English Hundred, not mentioned by name until King Edgar (959-75), Stenton, F. M., *Anglo-Saxon England* (2nd edn; Oxford, 1947) 289-90 and 295-8, is still useful, though there has been much later discussion. It might be possible to argue that the Welsh *cantref* was borrowed from late Anglo-Saxon England by anglicising Welsh kings like Hywel Dda, thouth this is hardly possible for the similar Irish *tuath* or petty kingdom, which is in any case attested at a much earlier date. It is hard to escape the conclusion that we are dealing with a widespread system of very early origin. The *pagus* of Roman Britain and Gaul, itself probably of pre-Roman origin, may be basically similar.

[26] Wade Evans, *Vita Cadoci,* op. cit. Preface. 24-5; *Vita Gundleii* 172-3.

[27] There is a a useful map of Gwent rural deaneries in: Davies, E. T., *An Ecclesiastical History of Monmouthshire,* Pt. 1 (Risca, 1953). He tabulates (115-23) the deanery and parish lists of he 1254 Norwich and 1291 Pope Nicholas taxations. See also: Crouch, D., *Llandaff Episcopal Acts, 1140-1287* (South Wales Record Society Cardiff, 1991).

[28] Wade Evans, *Vita Gundleii,* op. cit. 172-93; *Vita Sancti Tathei* (The Life of St Tatheus) ibid. 270-87. For discussion, see: Knight, J. K., 'St Tatheus of Caerwent': An analysis of the Vespasian Life', *Monm. Antiq.* III: 1 (1970-1) 29-35.

[29] Wade Evans, *Vita Tathei,* op. cit. 277-9.

[30] Ibid. 274-5 (for 'twelve canons').

[31] Brooke, C., 'The Archbishops of St. David's, Llandaff and Caerleon-on-Usk' in Chadwick, N. K. Hughes, K. Brooke, C., and Jackson, K. (ed.)., *Studies in the Early British Church* (Cambridge, 1958) 234-5. This work has been reprinted in: Brooke, C., *The Church and the Welsh Border in the Central Middle Ages* (Cambridge Studies in Celtic History VII, 1986) 16-49.

[32] Evans and Rhys, op. cit. 270. (The priests were Iouanaul, Novis, Elinui, Cinon and Judhail).

[33] Wade Evans, *Vita Tathei,* op. cit. 285-7. On the rôle of public reading of the lives of saints in churches and monasteries, see: Gaiffier, B. de., 'L'Hagiographie et son Public au XIe Siècle', *Miscellanea Historica in Honorum Leonis Van der Essen* (Brussels and Paris, 1947) I, 135-66 .

[34] Garmonsway, G. N., *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (Everyman's Library; London, 1960) C and D texts, *sub anno* 1065; also: Plumber, C., *Two of the Saxon Chronicles Parallel I* (Oxford, 1892) and II (Oxford, 1899).

[35] Bromwich, R. (ed.), *Trioedd Ynys Prydein* (2nd end; Cardiff, 1978) 229; Edwards, N. and Lane, A., *Early Medieval Settlements in Wales , A.D. 400-1100* (Cardiff and Bangor, 1988) 108-98, and references there cited. More recently, a ninth century date has been suggested for this text. *Cf.* Smith, L. Toulmin, *Leland's Itinerary in Wales* (London, 1906), where: *'Porteskewin . . . is bytwixte Chepstow and Cair guent . . . and is one of the Limites of the length of Wales. The other is Port-Hoyger by Holishead in Anglesey'.*

[36] The site of a rectangular stone building, presumably medieval and manorial, lies within an oval enclosure, of which the churchyard occupies the north-east angle. The church would have been within the enclosure.

[37] Coxe, W., *An Historical Tour through Monmouthshire* (London, 1801) 24.

[38] I am very grateful to Mr Steven Parry and my colleague, Rick Turner, for discussion of the former course of the Nedern.

[39] Boon, G. C., 'Three bones of St Tatheus or Duw yn anghyfiawn ni rann', *Monm. Antiq.* IV: 3-4 (1981-2) 2-5; Knight, J. K. and Lane, A. 'Caerwent', in Edwards and Lane, op. cit. 35-8.

[40] Knight, J. K., 'Post-Roman Evidence from Caerwent' (*forthcoming*).

[41] Blair, J., 'Anglo-Saxon Minsters, a topographical review', in Blair and Sharpe, op. cit. 235-7.

[42] Evans and Rhys, op. cit. 218; Davies, Wendy, op. cit. 120 (No. 110).

[43] Davies, Wendy, op. cit., Charters Nos. 109 (Villa Guidcon, identified as Tryleg Grange); 110 (Lann Bedeui-Penterry), and 111 (Cairnonui and its weirs).

[44] Ibid. Nos. 221 (*ca.* A. D. 950), 243-4 (Urbs Guenti, *ca.* 980), and 274 (*Cairguent, ca.* 1075). For the full text, see: Evans and Rhys, op. cit. 220, 243, 274.

[45] Dolley, M. and Knight, J. K., 'Some single finds of tenth and eleventh century English coins from Wales', *Arch. Camb.* CXIX (1970) 75-82.

[46] Butler, L.A.S., 'St. Kynemark's Priory, Chepstow: An interim report on the excavations from 1962-5', *Monm. Antiq.* II: 1 (1965) 33-41. Davies, Wendy, op. cit. 105-6, dates the charter referring to the *'ecclesia Cynmarchi'* and its territory to about 625 A.D.

[47] Wade Evans, *Vita Cadoci,* op. cit. 125-37, has good examples of food renders in the early charters. For discussion, see: Pryce, H., 'Ecclesiastical wealth in Early Medieval Wales' in Edwards and Lane, op. cit. 28-9.

[48] Evans and Rhys, op. cit. 278-9.

[49] Jenkins, P., 'Regions and Cantrefs in Early Medieval Glamorgan', *Cambridge Medieval Celtic Studies* 15 (Summer 1988) 31-50.

[50] Richards, M., 'Gwrinydd, Gorfynydd and Llyswyrny', *Bull. Board of Celtic Studies* XVIII (1960) 383-6; Smith, B., 'The Kingdom of Morgannwg and the Norman Conquest of Glamorgan' in Pugh, T. B (ed.), *Glamorgan County History* III (Cardiff, 1971) 15-6; Knight, J. K. (1984) op. cit. II, 365, 375-6.

[51] Nash-Williams (1950) op. cit. Nos. 220, 222-3.

[52] Wade Evans, *Vita Gundleii,* op. cit. 182-93, *cap.* 14 ('priest and clergy'); *cap. 16* (*'clerus beatissimi Gunley'*: 'the clergy of the most blessed Gwynllyw').

[53] Way, A., 'Reliquaries found in South Wales and Anglesey,' *Arch. Camb.* 1870, 29. For comparative plans of Partrishow, St. Gwynllyw's, and the shrine chapels of other Welsh saints, see; Knight, J. K., 'Excavations at St Barruc's Chapel, Barry Island', *Trans. Cardiff Naturalists Soc.* 99 (1976-8), publ. 1981) 58, Fig. 8.

[54] Wade Evans, *Vita Gundleii,* op. cit. 186-9.

[55] Hart, W. H. (ed.), *Hisotria et Cartularium Monasterii Sancti Petri Gloucestriae* (Rolls cr., 3 vols. 1863-7) II, DXVI, p.55, for the agreement of 1146 between the monks of 'Basselach' and Picot, chaplain of St Gwynllyw's, regarding the boundaries of the two parishes. Conway Davies, J., *Episcopal Acts relating to Welsh Dioceses* (Hist. Soc of the Church in Wales, 1948) II, L. 100, 637, including a reference to the chapel of 'St Gladewis' (*St Gwladys*) which Laudomer built upon the River Ebbw.

[56] Roberts, T., 'Welsh Ecclesiastical Place Names and Archaeology' in Edwards and Lane, op. cit. 41-2, citing earlier authorities.

[57] Dugdale, W., *Monasticon Anglicanum* IV (London, 1846) 636 (*'pontis de Basselech'*); Evans and Rhys, op, cit., 272-3 (Benedict, priest of 'Bassalech' was witness to a charter in 1072-4): Conway Davies, op. cit. II, L. 230-1; NLW, Tredegar Park MSS, Box 58/Nos. 131-2 (for the tenement of *'manachty': 'monastic land',* surviving at Bassaleg in 1668).

[58] Smith, L. T., op. cit, III, 13-4.

[59] Doherty, C., 'The basilica in Early Ireland', *Peritia* 3, 303-15; Roberts, T., op. cit. 41, n. 56.

[6] A full study of the Welsh *'eglwysau y beddau'* by Dr Nancy Edwards will appear shortly.

[61] Coxe, W., op. cit. opp. p.59; Glynne, sir R., 'Notes on the Older Churches in the Four Welsh Dioceses', *Arch. Camb.* 1902, 83-4.

[62] *Arch. Camb.* 1859, 234.

[63] Wade Evans, *Vita Gundleii,* op. cit. 176-9.

[64] Conway Davies, op. cit. II, L. 100 (p.637); Crouch, op. cit. 2.

[65] Until late in the 19th century a half-acre patch of land on the bank of the Ebbw formed part of the glebe of St Woolos (*Gwynllyw's*) Church. A cottage nearby was said to have been known as 'The Chapel'. Nearby also was a well known as "Lady's Well". A bath-house was built over it in 1719 and demolished when the railway (the celebrated 'Golden Mile') was built through Tredegar Park; Morgan, C.O.S., 'History and Descent of the Lordship of Wentllwch', *Arch. Camb.* 1885, 262-3.

[66] *Cal. Patent Rolls, 1327-1330, 507-8 (for Edward III's confirmatory charter in 1330).*

[67] *Taxatio Ecclesiastica* (Record Commission: London, 1802) 278.

[68] Nash-Williams, V. E., *The Roman Frontier in Wales* (2nd edn, edit. by Jarrett, M. G.; Cardiff, 1969) 135-7.

[69] Wade Evans, Vita Cybii, op. cit. xii, 234-51.

[70] On bells of this type, see: Bourke, C., 'Early Irish handbells', *Jnl. Royal Soc. Antiq. Ireland* 110 (1980) 52-66, and Knight, J. K. (1984) op. cit. 370-1, n. 26.

[71] Evans and Rhys, op. cit. 199a, and Davies, Wendy., op. cit. Charter 86, dated *ca.* A.D. 750 (*Merthir Tecmed*); Evans and Rhys, op. cit. Charter 157 dated A.D. 1072, and Wade Evans, *Vita Cadoci,* op. cit. 68-73 (*Tref Redinauc* = Tredunnock, and *Merthir Tecmed*).

[72] Richards, M., 'Ecclesiastical and secular in Welsh medieval settlements', *Studia Celtica* 3 (1968) 9-18; Roberts, T. op. cit. 42, n.56.

[73] Nash-Williams (1950) op. cit., Nos. 170, 238, 248, 346.

[74] For a characteristic example, see: Wade Evans, *Vita Tatheii,* op. cit. 280-3 (Machuta of Llanvaches).

[75] St Nicholas was little known in Western Europe before his bones were stolen from Myra in Lycia (in south-west Turkey) in 1807 and taken to Bari in Italy. Montgomery is a well dated foundation of 1223, a Nicholas dedication again associated with a castle.

[76] On the *Life of Oudoceus, Jnl. Theological Studies* 43 (1942) 204-16, 44 (1943) 59-67; reprinted in Evans, D. S. (ed.), *Lives of the Welsh Saints* (Cardiff, 1971) 207-29.

[77] Chadwick, O., 'The evidence of dedications in the early history of the Welsh Church', *Studies in Early British History* (ed. Chadwick, H. M. and N. K. *et al.*, Cambridge, 1959) 173-88; Yates, N., 'The "Age of the Saints" in Carmarthenshire', *Carms. Antiq.* 9 (1973) 53-81.

[78] A catalogue of Welsh church dedications will be found in: Wade Evans, A. W., 'Parochiale Wallicanum', *Y Cymmrodor 22* (1910) 22-124. Lewis, S. M., *Topographical Dictionary of Wales* (2 vols., London, 1833) is also useful.

[79] For a map, see: Bowen, E. G., *The Settlements of the Celtic Saints in Wales* (Cardiff, 1956) 42.

[80] Dugdale, W., op. cit. 76, for the Charter of Gwethenoc: *'the church of St Cattwg on ground near my castle'.* Its exact position is far from certain, though in 1743 the Revd. William Cole recorded a tradition that it lay under Millwards, north-east of Nailers Lane 'under the declivity of the castle'. I am very grateful to Mr Keith Kissack for this last reference and for his comments (in letters) on the siting of the chapel, though he adds that the evidence is largely speculative.

[81] Davies, E. T., op. cit. 33-4.

[82] Wade Evans, *Vita Cadoci,* op. cit. 110-3; on the shrine, see: Knight, J. K. (1984) op. cit. 369-70.

[83] The basic meaning in a Christian context is a tomb or sacred place, as on the seventh century stone from Whithorn in Scotland: Thomas, C., *Christianity in Roman Britain to A.D. 500* (London, 1981) 291.

[84] Wade Evans, *Vita Cadoci,* op. cit. 128-9; Macmoil appears elsewhere in the *Life* as one of Cadog's chief disciples (*cap. 11, 12, 15*).

[85] Manmoel is at N.G.R. SO 179033 at the head of the Nan-y-felin brook in Bedwellty parish. A large near-circular enclosure at Bradgy (SO 183029) stands out from the post-medieval field pattern and merits further study. Ty'r Capel farm nearby may have been used as an early Nonconformist meeting house. I know of no evidence of this, but it is a regional style house of *ca.* 1550-1610. If the name is original, it presumably refers to the church.

[86] Davies, E. T., op. cit. 104-5.

[87] For a map of Glamorgan parishes, see: *Glamorgan County History* II, op. cit. Map 4.

[88] Bowen, E. G. (1956) op. cit., and his 'The Settlements of the Celtic Saints in south Wales', *Antiquity* XIX (1945) 175-86.

[89] Chadwick (1959) op. cit. 173-88.

[90] Davies, Wendy., *Wales in the Early Middle Ages* (Leicester U. P., 1982) 144.

[91] Blair and Sharpe, op. cit., is an important collection of recent work on this topic.

[92] As for example, Knight, J. K. (1981) op. cit. 28-65; Britnell, W. J., 'Capel Maelog . . . Excavations, 1984-87', *Medieval Arch,* 34 (1900) 27-96; Pryce, H., 'Pastoral Care in early medieval Wales', in Blair and Sharpe, op. cit. 41-62.

[93] Ward, G., 'The list of Saxon churches in the *Textus Roffensis', Arch. Cantiana* XLIV (1932) 39-59, and his 'The list of Saxon churches in the *Domesday Monachorum* and the White Book of St Augustine', ibid. XLV (1933) 60-89.

[94] Crouch, D., op. cit. 5 (No. 6).

[95] As for example, Tregare; its neighbour, Dingestow, was another *Merthir* (*Merthir Dincat*) in 1129: Conway Davies, op. cit. 627, L. 63, and clearly an early foundation. The shape of the two parishes suggests that, with the extra-parochial monastic Parc Grace Dieu (*al. Treurgan*) they once formed a single unit.

[96] Davies, E. T. op. cit. 111, citing *Cal. Papal Registers* (*Letters*) IX, 203-4.

CHEPSTOW CASTLE: EXCAVATIONS IN THE GREAT GATEHOUSE, 1991

By KEVIN BOOTH

Introduction

During September and October of 1991 a small excavation in the Great Gatehouse of Chepstow Castle was carried out by a small team on behalf of Cadw: Welsh Historic Monuments. The excavation was necessitated by the proposed installation of a custodian's lavatory and washroom complex in the Guardroom Tower. The lavatory itself was to occupy the whole of the ground floor of the tower, whilst drainage was to be directed underground through an area known as the Porter's Lodge. A shallow land drain around the south-west corner of the Gatehouse structure was also to be inserted. Figure 1 shows the three areas of excavation, each of which were excavated to the natural soil or bedrock. This excavation was the first to use modern archaeological techniques within the castle walls. Some exploration, largely within the Lower Bailey, has been carried out in the 1920's, but the precise location of this investigation is unknown.

Guardroom Tower

The stratigraphy of the Guardroom deposits revealed much disturbance. Sometime in the 16th century much of the earlier deposits were cleared away, leaving only the barest traces of original 13th century evidence. The excavation has thrown light on the construction of the Tower and also shows that the Tower was still in use well into the 18th century. Documentary evidence suggests occupation may have continued into the 19th century.

The depth down to natural subsoil for the excavation was up to 130cm (*Fig. 2*), however, the actual depth of surviving occupation levels was only around 50cm. Within this area of stratigraphy three separate floor levels were determined, complicated by two distinct central pits, much floor patching and some modern disturbance. The most recent surface dated to the latter half of the 18th century and seems to have been fairly substantial. A thick make-up layer, (*Fig. 2:* B), was capped by a thin level band of sandy mortar (A) which would have been suitable as a base for a flagged floor. Unfortunately no flags remained, perhaps not surprisingly considering other evidence of robbing contemporary with this period. The make-up layer (B) also backfilled a large central pit in the centre of the tower (1) and two sizeable post holes. Since these features were dug immediately prior to the laying of the floor (A) they may have been associated with a general refurbishment of the tower in the 18th century, perhaps as scaffolding holes to support the ceiling above.

Previous to this another surface was encountered again dating to the 18th century. This surface represents a new life for the Guardroom after what would appear to have been a considerable period of neglect. Below this level (C) there had been a much patched cobbled surface (D), which was heavily pitted. A large depression in the centre of the tower (2) had remained unattended so that much organic material had collected before the make-up (C) was introduced. Deposits associated with the life of the cobbled floor indicate it went out of use in the late 17th century. This would suggest that there was up to half a century when the Guardroom was unused, corresponding with the withdrawal of Chepstow's garrison in 1690 on the death of the castle's chief resident, the imprisoned Henry Marten. This inactivity can also be traced in the Porter's Lodge.

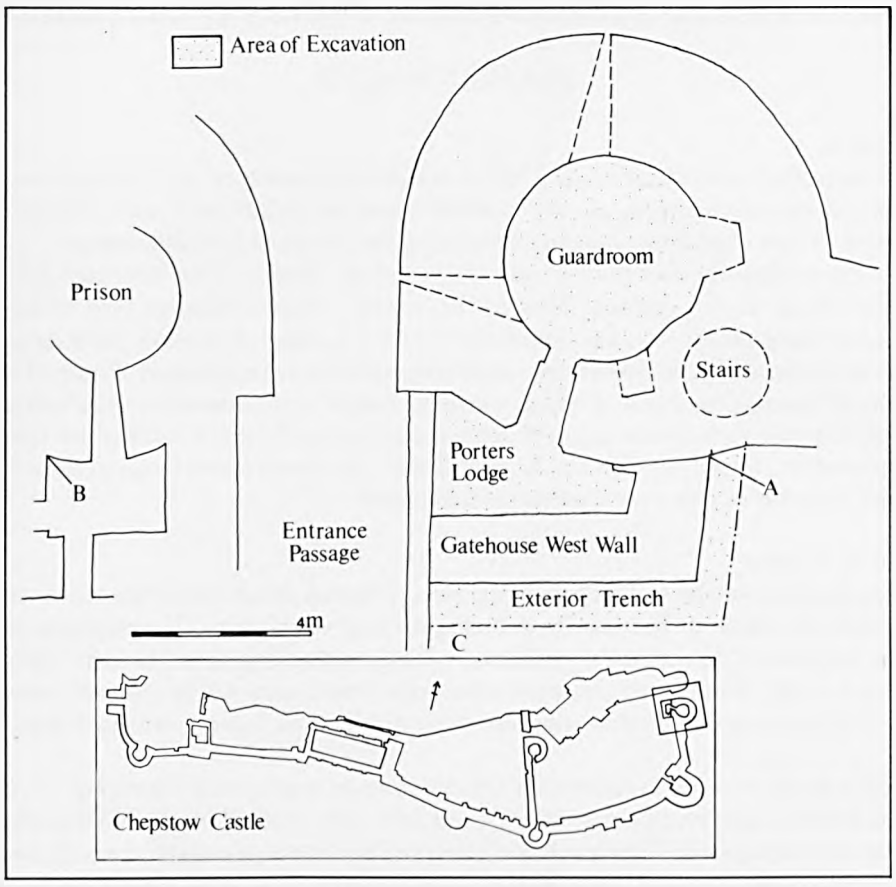


Fig. 1: Plan of the Gatehouse Excavations, 1991.

Documentary evidence has thrown some light on the history of the castle in the 16th century. Such evidence indicates that the Guardroom Tower underwent a substantial structural change at this time when many parts of the castle were converted for residential use. In the tower two and three-light windows were inserted to replace arrow slits in the upper floors. Hearth stones for a ground floor fireplace, contemporary with these changes, were found during the excavation. A more modern robbing trench may mark a later hearth. It would seem that the laying of the cobbled surface (D) can be linked with this surviving fireplace.

The cobbled surface, fireplace and corresponding structural alterations were the earliest surviving occupation levels. However, construction deposits dating in the 1240's survive with the natural slope being quite steep at this point. Very substantial foundations were deemed necessary. At both east and west sides of the Guardroom, (the slope runs west to east), the foundations (E) were around 60cm wider than the walls above. A build up of split mortar around the edges of the tower indicated that the tower walls were then raised to at

least the height of the doorway threshold before the majority of levelling material, most likely river gravel and silts (G), was dumped through the entrance. A trench (3) dug through the construction deposits may have been used to inspect the buried lower courses of tower wall. This seems to have been carried out just before the laying of the cobbled surface (D) and so probably at the time of the 16th century alterations. The construction of the lavatory complex within the tower has masked the Guardroom's interior masonry to the first floor level. A recording of the architectural detail has been made.

The Porter's Lodge

The surviving strata in this area was poorly preserved and the early levels were once again destroyed by subsequent activity. The excavation did produce a sizeable collection of 17th century clay pipes and, most importantly, showed that the rear rectangular portion of the Gatehouse (*Fig.* 1), was added at a later date to the two round towers.

The stratified layers here were again divided into two distinct sequences as in the case of the Guardroom. The lower levels were associated with the construction of the tower and the surfaces connected with the building and its early existence. Finds from these layers were few and of poor quality, apart from a Henry II silver Short Cross penny, deliberately cut in half. The upper levels were a mix of clay and mortar floor fragments and charcoal dumps from the fireplace within the Porters Lodge (*Fig.* 1). In these charcoal dumps were found over 300 fragments of clay pipes, all of the same style and dateable between around 1650 and 1690 (*Fig,* 3). Like the Guardroom therefore we see a gap between construction deposits from the 13th century and the late 17th century. An explanation for some of this missing stratigraphy is that the Gatehouse was constructed in two phases.

Structurally this can be seen by the joint between the Gatehouse west wall and the outer Guardroom tower wall at the doorway to the staircase (*Fig.* 1, A). Here it would appear that a slot was cut into the existing masonry of the tower in order to insert the new wall. This disturbed the relieving arch for the staircase doorway. Also, the Gatehouse west wall protrudes in such a way as to partially obstruct access to the door. Inspection of the same joint between Prison and rear Gatehouse walls (*Fig.* 1: B), again shows a two, or even three phase building pattern. These structural anomalies would appear to be more that simple changes of mind during construction. Another architectural detail observed through excavation provides further evidence for the Porter's Lodge being a late addition. This is seen in the inclusion of a 'Bull-nose' door jamb in the lower courses of the Gatehouse west wall. It has been suggested by Jeremy Knight that such a moulding dates to after 1280, making this wall at least forty years later than the Guardroom and Prison. In fact the wall is likely to be significantly later than this as the jamb is re-used and serves no architectural purpose.

Excavation also showed that the foundations for this wall were inserted into a trench which cuts through construction and occupation levels belonging to the tower, whilst the layers associated with the Lodge fireplace lap over this cut. Moreover, the foundations for the west wall of the Gatehouse are of a careless nature and entirely different from those of the 13th century tower. It has proved impossible to date the construction of the Lodge. No archaeological levels could be clearly linked with its construction, though a more in depth study of the architectural relationships and styles may yet yield the information.

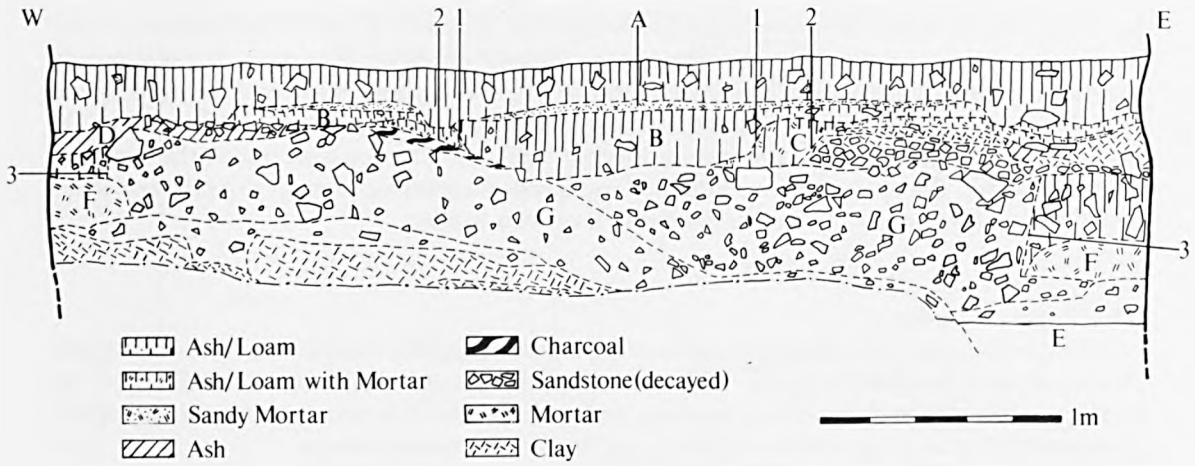


Fig. 2: Section, south-facing, through the centre of the Guardroom.

Gatehouse Exterior Trench

This trench yielded little of significance. A thick redeposited layer of natural was revealed only 30cm below the present grass level of the Lower Bailey. No evidence of the Bailey's surface was encountered but the trench was only dug to a width of 100cm and consolidation work to the Gatehouse west wall had caused disturbance. The excavation did reveal a rubble feature immediately to the north of the entrance passage for the castle: (*Fig.* 1: C). This acted as a retaining wall to hold back the redeposited material of the Lower Bailey. The feature is later than the Gatehouse west wall and can provisionally be dated in the 15th century.

The Finds

The Pottery

The list below contains the pottery types found in the occupation layers from the excavation. These types are a good representation of that found in the excavation as a whole.

Guardroom

Context:

005 . . . Latest 18th century surface (*Fig. 2*: A).
Delphed blue and white tile, Bristol.

017 . . . Make-up to early 18th century surface (*Fig. 2*: C
North Devon Gravel Tempered ware.
Staffordshire Slip ware.

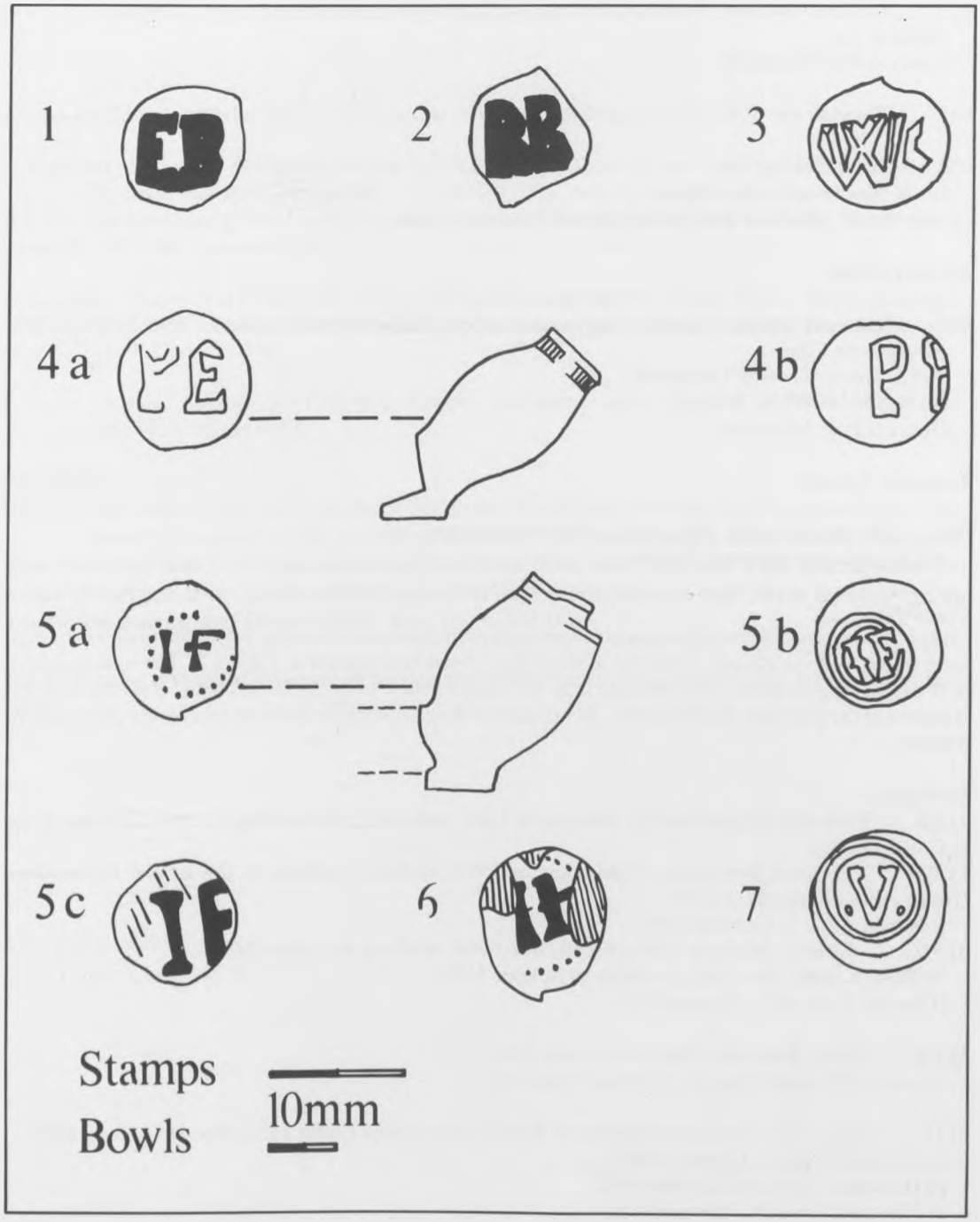


Fig. 3: Pipemakers' stamps found during excavation.

038 . . . Cobbled Surface, 16th century (*Fig. 2*: D)
Malling Jug.
General Post-Medieval.

040 . . . Possible pre-16th century surface.

054 Medieval Coking Pot.
Local Medieval Green Glazed.
One Shard Monnow Valley Complexed Rouletted ware.

Porters Lodge

026 . . . Rake out deposits from fireplace, contained over 300 clay pipe fragments. Late 17th century.
Manganese Glaze.
North Devon Gravel Tempered.
Staffordshire White Ware.
General Post Medieval.

Exterior Trench

068 . . . Revetment wall, (*Fig. 1,* C). 15th/16th century.
All late Medieval Green Glazed.

Clay Pipes
Over 400 stem and 140 bowl fragments were recovered during excavation. Nineteen makers' stamps were found and the clearly definable of these have been reproduced in Figure 3. The vast majority of the bowl fragments were of Oswald type 4c, (1640-1660), or 6, (1660 to 1680). It seems that the majority of the pipes are Bristol made. My thanks to Reg Jackson for information on the pipe makers identity.

See Figure 3.
1) EB . . . Probably Edward Battle, freedom in 1660, definitely not working in 1667. [Oswald Type ?, Context 026].
2) RB . . . Richard Berryman, Pipemaker in 1619, founder member of the Bristol Pipemakers Guild, certainly dead by 1658.
[Oswald Type ?, Context 026].
3) WC . . . Either—William Cherrington, free 1660, working to at least 1690.
William Cissell, free 1661, working to at least 1670.
[Oswald Type ?4C, Context 026].

4) PE . . . Philip Edwards, Free 1650, died 1863.
a) and b) [Oswald Type 4c, Context Unstrat].

5) IF . . . James Fox, Founder member of Bristol Pipemakers Guild 1652, free 1654, died 1682.
a) [Oswald Type 6, Context 006].
b) [Oswald Type ?4c, Context 003].
c) [Oswald Type £6, Context 026].

6) IH . . . John Hunt, Free 1651, working to 1680.
[Oswald Type 6, Context 008].

7) V . . . Unknown, no parallels found [Oswald Type ?, Context 026].

Coins

Report by Edwards Besly, National Museum of Wales.

1) England, Henry II (1154-89). Silver cut halfpenny, Short Cross type, + REII [. . . . .]R (Reinald/Renald, Norwich). Calss IB/c, c. 1180-89. The coin is corroded, but the reverse details indicate that it was not greatly worn when lost. A date of deposit towards the end of he 12th century is feasible [SF 100, Context 075].

2) England, Henry VIII (1509-47). Groat (4d) of debased silver, Tower Mint, Third Coinage, 1544-7. Third bust?, stemmed trefoil stops and ?annulets in reverse forks. Poorly struck but not worn. [SF 109, Context 076].

3) Great Britain, George II (1727-60). Copper halfpenny, date illegible, 1729-54. Worn and corroded. [SF16, Context 003].

Summary

Excavations in the Great Gatehouse of Chepstow Castle have revealed a fragmented picture of the occupation history of the building. Much of the stratigraphy between the 12th and 16th centuries had been destroyed and surfaces from the 17th and 18th centuries were poorly preserved. It would certainly seem that little attention was paid to the upkeep of the Gatehouse during and immediately after the Civil War.

The Association is indebted to Cadw: Welsh Historic Monuments, for a grant in aid of publication of this article.

A WATCHING BRIEF REPORT ON THE 1990-91 BANK STREET DEVELOPMENT, CHEPSTOW

By RAYMOND HOWELL

Construction in Chepstow during 1990-91 saw a range of shops built over the Bank Street portion of the town's upper car park which is located within the medieval Port Wall. The redevelopment led to demolition of brick-built Edwardian lavatories as well as the substantial building which had until recently housed the Ivor Parfitt ironmongers. Previous demolition had been associated with development of the car park in the 1970's. Maps ranging from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries confirm that during this period an unbroken range of buildings fronted on to the street first described as Hooker Hill Street and subsequently as Hawker's Hill, Hocker Hill, Back and now Bank Street[1]. The buildings can be traced in the Survey of the Lordship and Manor of Chepstow, 1687[2], which lists burgages with gardens behind extending the length of a then continuous Hocker or Hooker Hill Street. As builders used heavy machinery to dig foundations for the new development, foundations of these earlier buildings were revealed with the base of one rendered wall running at right angles to the road and remains of a brick vaulted cellar. There was considerable tumbled stone rubble, bricks and fragments of slate and glass. Multiple construction phases were evident but no sequence of building could be determined in the circumstances. The foundations extended to a depth of approximately 0.83 metre and overlay natural clay.

Behind the remains of this range of recorded buildings ware boundary/garden walls and a series of pits containing dark soil, some charcoal fragments, bone, shell and sherds of post medieval pottery. Throughout the construction area, the darkened soil overlaying clay contained a range of post medieval sherds, fragments of clay pipe, glass, slate and considerable amounts of bone. Low in this occupation horizon were two sherds of Barnstable gravel tempered ware dating from the late seventeenth or early eighteenth century. Other artefacts included one reasonably complete clay pipe which appears to date from the middle eighteenth century and a number of sherds of eighteenth century Bristol slip wares. There was a wide range of Victorian and later pottery fragments. All of the evidence obtained is consistent with continuous occupation from the seventeenth century to the present.

Beyond the main development area, new lavatories were built with a trench dug to accommodate a drain. This trench, dug to a depth of approximately 0.8 metre was behind and at a right angle to the old Bell Inn. A layer of dark brown/black soil overlay lighter soil at approximately 30.5 cm. At the base of the trench, there was a uniform layer of stone. Without excavation, it is impossible to determine whether this feature is structural but there is scope for additional investigation in this area. At a depth of approximately 30.5 cm., a crushed stoneware cup was recovered. Also found was a Bristol slipware fragment, one brown glazed sherd near the bottom of the trench and a cow's tooth.

Conclusion

Documentary and archaeological evidence gained from this watching brief confirm occupation on the Bank Street site from the seventeenth century to the present. Buildings on burgage plots facing the street were backed by gardens where refuse pits produced a

predictable range of materials. The most surprising feature of this site is the total lack of medieval material despite close proximity to the Port Wall. There is a clear suggestion that during the Medieval period, this area was not built up or that any building closely approximated the line of structures shown on the earliest surviving maps which date from the seventeenth century. Even assuming this to be the case, however, the lack of any medieval material is slightly surprising. Given the importance of Chepstow in the history of urbanization in Medieval Wales, there is a clear need for further excavation within the town walls. Any subsequent development in the town should have such excavation as an important pre-condition. Only in this way, can any clearer picture of the early development of Chepstow emerge.

NOTES

[1]I am grateful to Anne Rainsbury,curator of Chepstow Museum, for access to the map holdings of the museum. Maps/plans of the town date from 1686, 1801, 1835 and 1899.

[2]Gwent C.R.O., *The Survey of the Lordship and Manor of Chepstow, 1687.*

EXCAVATIONS AT ST MARY'S PRIORY, USK

By C. NEIL MAYLAN

Introduction

In February 1987, work began on a second extension to the graveyard of St Mary's Priory, Usk. This was to the south of the first extension and to the east of the 'Garden of Rest' which lies immediately outside the present east end of the church (*see Fig. 2*). This development was carried out for Monmouth District Council (now Monmouth Borough Council) by Withey Construction Limited. The proximity of the work to the Priory church raised the possibility that archaeological features might be disturbed, as it seemed likely that the extreme eastern end of the original monastic church extended into this area.[1] It was also possible that the work might reveal extra-mural Roman activity associated with the 1st century fortress. Accordingly a watching brief was carried out during the first phase of work, which consisted of the demolition of several brick-built workshops, known as "Duke's Yard", formerly the workshops for the Duke of Beaufort's estate and more recently used as a garage and repair yard. No features of archaeological interest were observed until a vehicle inspection chamber was removed and human bone was found in the exposed section. After consultation with Monmouth District Council and the incumbent, the Reverend R. L. Davies, permission for a six week excavation was granted to the Glamorgan-Gwent Archaeological Trust. The only condition imposed on this work was that a strip of 1.5m. wide around the edge of the graveyard extension should not be disturbed.

Problems of Excavation

The excavation was carried out during February and March 1987 by a team of six; most of the excavation being carried out under a plastic shelter, enabling excavation to continue during periods of rain. The disturbed nature of the deposits, especially in the area of the excavation where there had been graveyard clearance in the medieval period, made the identification of individual grave cuts impossible. The lack of pottery and other finds, combined with the fact that many of the bones were disarticulated and re-deposited, also made it difficult to determine accurately when the cemetery was in use, but it was probably between the thirteenth and sixteenth centuries.

History of the Site

The conventual history of the Benedictine nunnery of Usk has been covered in detail in this journal and in a more general work on Norman Usk.[2] *Consequently this information is not repeated here.*

The priory of St Mary was surrendered to the Crown in August 1536. The conventual church, of which the present nave of St Mary's was part, appears to have been claimed by the parishioners, and was added to the parish church which then comprised what is now the north aisle.[3] The result was a building which soon proved to be too large for parochial purposes, and accordingly the presbytery and the south transept were demolished or allowed to collapse. The north transept was spared and later became a school, whilst the crossing below the tower was used for many years as a barn, separated from the present choir by a wall, blocking the west arch of the crossing. In 1544 the sites of the presbytery, the south transept, and the adjoining conventual buildings to the south (the remains of which are still known locally as "The Priory"), along with all the remaining lands of the

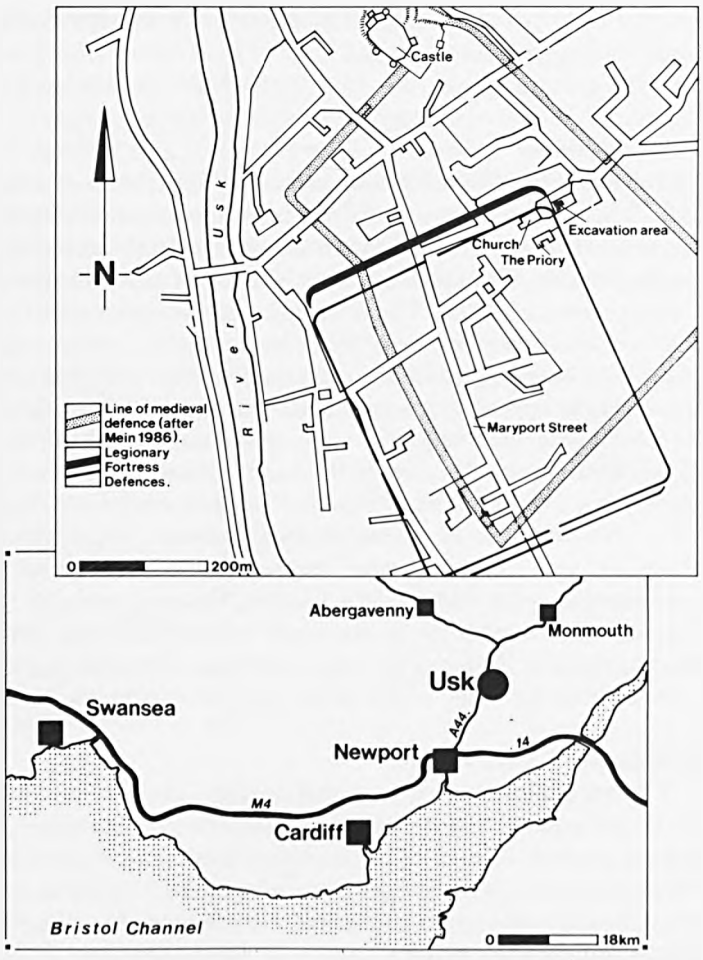


Fig. 1:
Usk Priory—General Location.

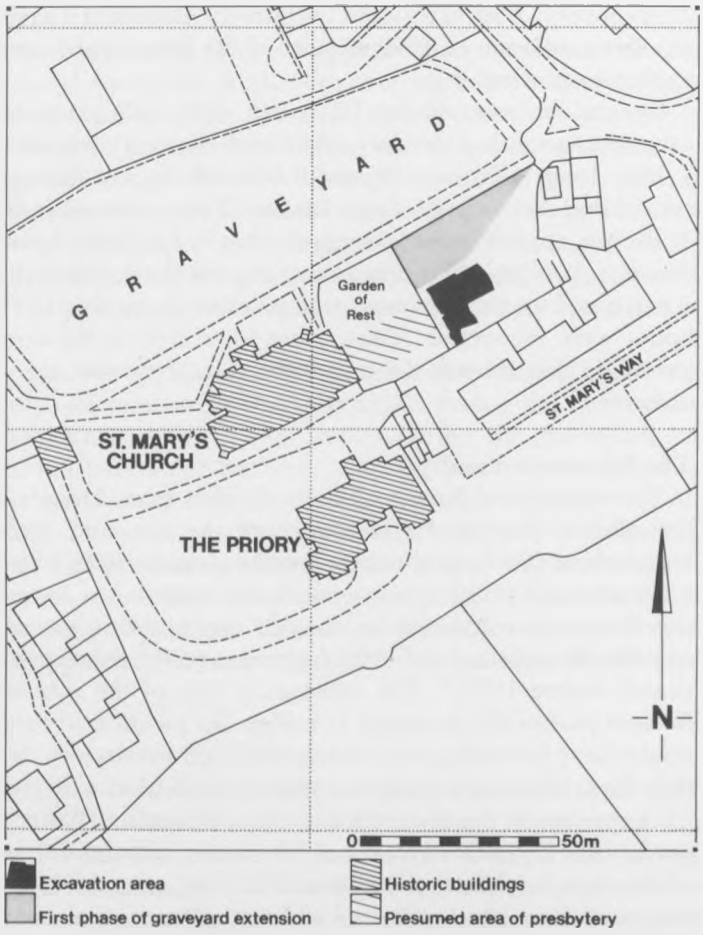
nunnery were sold to Roger Williams of Usk and Llangibby, the whole having then an annual value of £8 4s 7d.[4]

The Priory and its immediate lands came by marriage into the possession of the Jones family in 1555, and they held it until 1810, when it was purchased by the Duke of Beaufort.[5] Sometime between this date and 1843,[6] the Duke separated some land, including the excavated area, from the rest of the property of "The Priory" and built an estate timber yard on it. This was sold in 1800 when it comprised:—

> "a modern brick and tile house, lime house, paint room, sawpit, two sheds, carpenters workshop, brick and slated office and timber yard."[7]

After acquisition by the Rickards family, who lived in "The Priory" until 1939, the yard became their kitchen garden and vinery. The "brick and tile house", now "Vine Cottage", commemorates this use. The Rickards estate in Usk was broken up and sold piecemeal in 1965. The excavation site was acquired by Usk U.D.C. along with the rest of Duke's Yard, with the long term aim of providing land both for housing and cemetery extension. Since then the yard has been used for garaging and for light vehicle repairs.

Fig. 2:
Usk Priory—Setting of Site.



Post-Cemetery Features

Other than the buildings that were demolished, the principal recent feature was a well-constructed stone-lined chamber (*007*), cut into the substratum. It measured 6m east-west, 2.1m north-south and was 1.5 m. deep. It was constructed with thirteen courses of local Llanbadoc stone blocks, bonded by a pink-brown lime mortar. At the top of the northern wall (*003*), there was a niche (*267*), 0.40 m. wide, 0.32m. deep and 0.30m. high, which was 0.94m from the north-west corner of the structure. On the southern wall (*005*) there was a similar feature (268) of identical size which was some 1.3 m. from the south-east corner. The purpose of these niches is unknown. Before the structure had been recognised, its eastern wall, including any steps which might have led down to the base of the chamber, was removed by machine. However, examination of the machined cavity suggested that it was unlikely that there had been any permanent means of access.

At the base of the structure was a layer of hard packed grey clay and pebbles (*041*), overlaid by a well preserved timber (sp. *pinus*) floor (*035*), with a thin covering of sawdust. The structure had been filled in during the early 20th century with general rubbish (*002*), and then capped with concrete. The walls contained sherds of late 18th century pottery. The structure therefore was constructed in the post-medieval period and abandoned in the early

20th century. A local resident tentatively identified it as the sawpit which was mentioned in the sale catalogue of 1899 as part of the estate yard, and the presence of sawdust would appear to confirm this.

Several drainage ditches (*023, 043, 104, 153*), up to 1m. in depth, also cut through the excavated area, but the only other post-cemetery feature of interest was an ovoid pit (*157*), 1.50m. long, 1.00m. wide and 0.58m. deep, cut through the subsoil and containing the articulated skeleton of a single bovine. There were no indications of weathering on the sides of the pit, and this would suggest that it had been backfilled soon after being dug. It is therefore probable that this pit was dug for the burial of diseased animals. This pit had been cut in turn by a vehicle inspection pit (*039*) excavated in 1964, during which several human bones were recovered. These were identified at the time as being from a negroid male, although the records have not been traced and the reasons for this conclusion are unknown.[8]

The Monastic Presbytery

The Garden of Rest had been divided from Duke's Yard by a stone wall which was demolished during the clearance of the site and replaced by a new wall. The new foundations (*008*) cut through a robber trench (*040*) which has been dug for the removal of a sizeable wall running north-south and some 9.5m. long. The robbed wall cannot be dated precisely as it contained no datable material but was obviously constructed prior to the recently demolished wall, which appears on the tithe map of 1840 but not on the estate plans drawn before 1810.[9] The substantial size of the robbed wall suggests that it may have formed part of the monastic complex. Its position in respect of the church suggests that it might have formed part of the demolished presbytery. S. W. Williams postulated in 1886 that the presbytery would have been some 8.61m. (28′) in length with a straight end wall.[10] This appears on the plan reproduced in the present church guide,[11] but excavations carried out in 1964[12] revealed traces of a building, assumed to be the presbytery, some 12m. east of the church, thus showing that Williams' postulated line was incorrect. The substantial nature of the robbed wall, and its length (the equivalent of the width of the presbytery, plus buttresses) would suggest that this was the line of the eastern wall of the presbytery. This would mean that the presbytery would have measured some 22.60m. (73′ 5″), the same length as the medieval nave, thus giving a symmetrical plan to the church (*see fig. 2*).

THE CEMETERY

Problems of Interpretation

The excavated area was some 150m^2, into which a minimum of 73 graves had been cut, to bury at least 93 cadavers. With this density of burial, earlier skeletons were disturbed when later graves were cut through them. Certain of the skeletons could not be examined fully because of the restricted area available for excavation; others had been disturbed by the features of more modern date described above. Although there were at least 93 individuals buried in the excavated area, the skeletons of no more than 37 could be described as even three-quarters complete. Some of the skeletal material in the upper burials was badly degraded, perhaps as a result of corrosive chemicals leaching into the soil when the site was used as workshops and garaging.

Burial Density and Distribution

Seventy-three separate graves were identified. They all appeared to have been excavated for single inhumations. No evidence of deliberate double or group burials was noted, but in many of the graves bones from other skeletons were present. In most cases it would appear that earlier burials had been disturbed during the digging of the grave, and that the displaced bones were gathered together and placed in the new grave with the new burial. In some instances, the bones were carefully stacked around the new inhumation (*e.g. 111*), but in other cases the bones appear to have been thrown back during back-filling (*e.g. 083*). In three instances skulls appear to have been reburied in separate pits (*016, 030, 265*), possibly showing that this was the part of the human skeleton most respected or easily identified by the grave diggers.

The disturbance of the earlier graves would appear to have been caused in part by the lack of permanent grave markers. Only one tombstone was discovered during the excavation. The absence of others might be explained either by their removal after the graveyard was abandoned, or because most of the markers may have been of wood. It is however probable, given the number of graves disturbed by later burials, that the majority of graves did not have any form of permanent marker. There was no separation of the burials by sex; they had apparently been randomly placed. The greatest concentration of graves was in the south-western part of the site. These graves would have been directly outside the eastern wall of the presbytery, and therefore close to the High Altar. To the east and to the north the density of burial was less, although this apparent thinning was partly due to later disturbance (*contexts 029 and 157 above*).

The Charnel Pit (Plate 1)

In a central position on the southern boundary of the graveyard was found a pit (*220*) measuring 2.3m. east-west by 0.92m. north-south, 0.43m. deep, containing the disarticulated and jumbled skeletal remains of at least 35 individuals. The pit cut through the western end of a grave (*261*) and it is possible that one of the skulls in the pit was from this burial. The other bones would appear to have come from some form of graveyard clearance, as none of the bones were in an articulated position, implying that they were deposited in the pit after the removal of flesh.

The bones represented the remains of at least fourteen adult males, seventeen adult females and four adults whose sex could not be determined, and all appear to have been placed in the pit at the same time. The absence of infant bones probably reflects their poor survival rate (as seen elsewhere in this cemetery), especially after the rough treatment which they would have received during exhumation and reburial. The roughly equal numbers of both sexes represented would appear to remove the possibility that the burial represented the clearance of a battlefield. It is most likely that the pit was dug to receive bones after graveyard clearance. This could have occurred as a result of either the emptying of a charnel house,[14] or the direct reburial of bones from a cleared area of the graveyard. The area of ground immediately outside the presbytery was heavily disturbed, probably by the clearance of earlier inhumations, although it had later been reused for more burials.

Burial Alignment

The church at Usk lies at an angle 60° east of magnetic north, and the graves are all roughly aligned with the church. The alignment of the graves was determined by drawing

a line from the centre of the skull, through the centre of the spinal column to a point halfway between the feet. Three distinct groups of grave alignments could be identified. The first group (group A) was probably the earliest, as many of them were overlaid by later burials. Seventeen graves were aligned less than 8° south of the axis of the church. The second group (seventeen burials) was aligned between 3° and 9° north of the line of this axis, whilst the third group (eleven burials) was aligned between 11° and 17° north of the church line. There were four graves which did not fit into any group (*see fig. 4*).

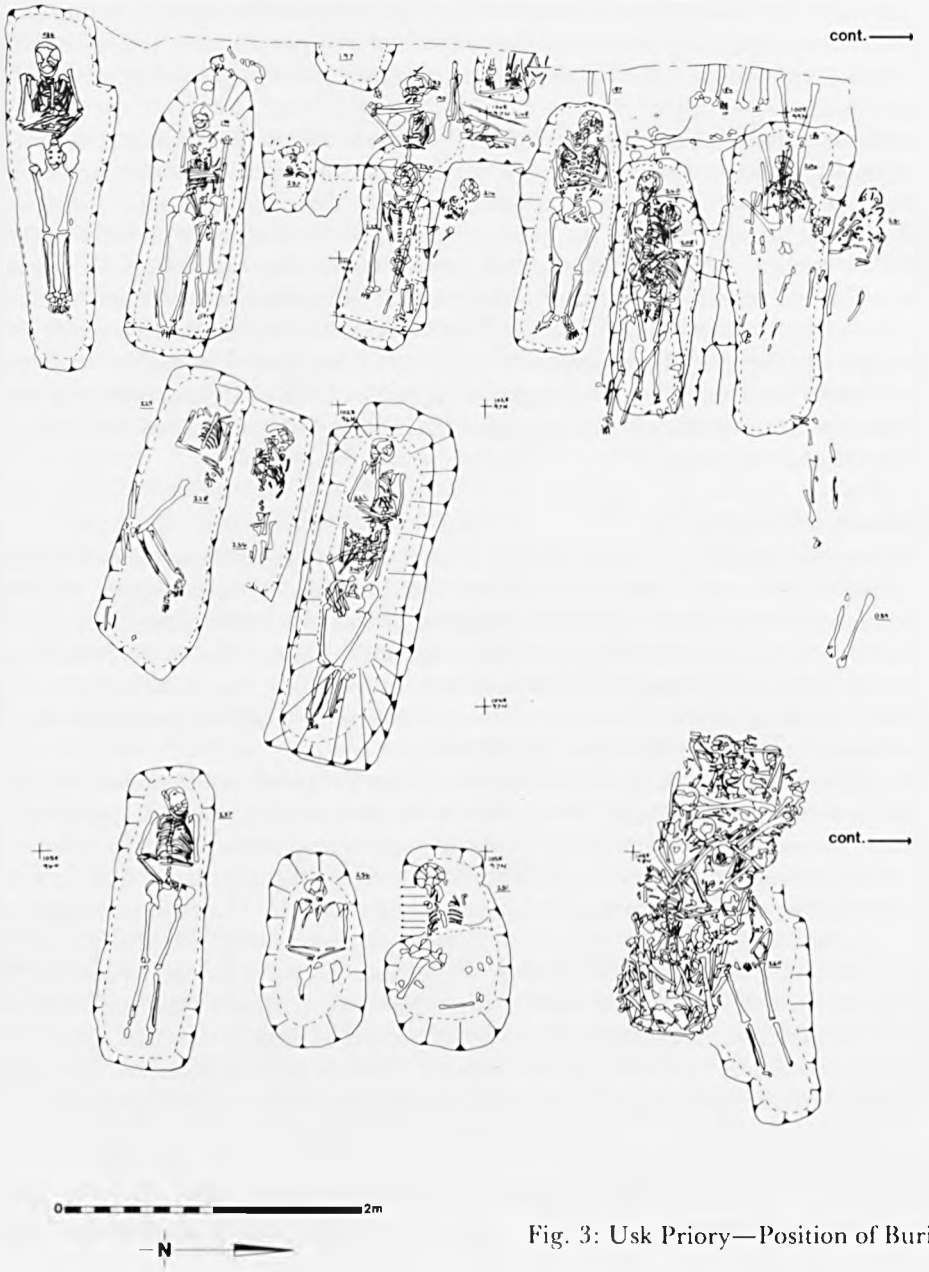


Fig. 3: Usk Priory—Position of Burials.

Groups A and B appear to have been dug in rows in which the line was established by the digging of the first grave. They predominate in two areas of the graveyard, the first to the east of the presbytery wall and the second in the north-east corner. The graves of group C were more randomly scattered with no apparent grouping (*see fig. 4*). It would appear that little effort was taken to ensure accurate alignment of the graves, but the likely focus for the alignments noted would appear to have been the axis of the church.

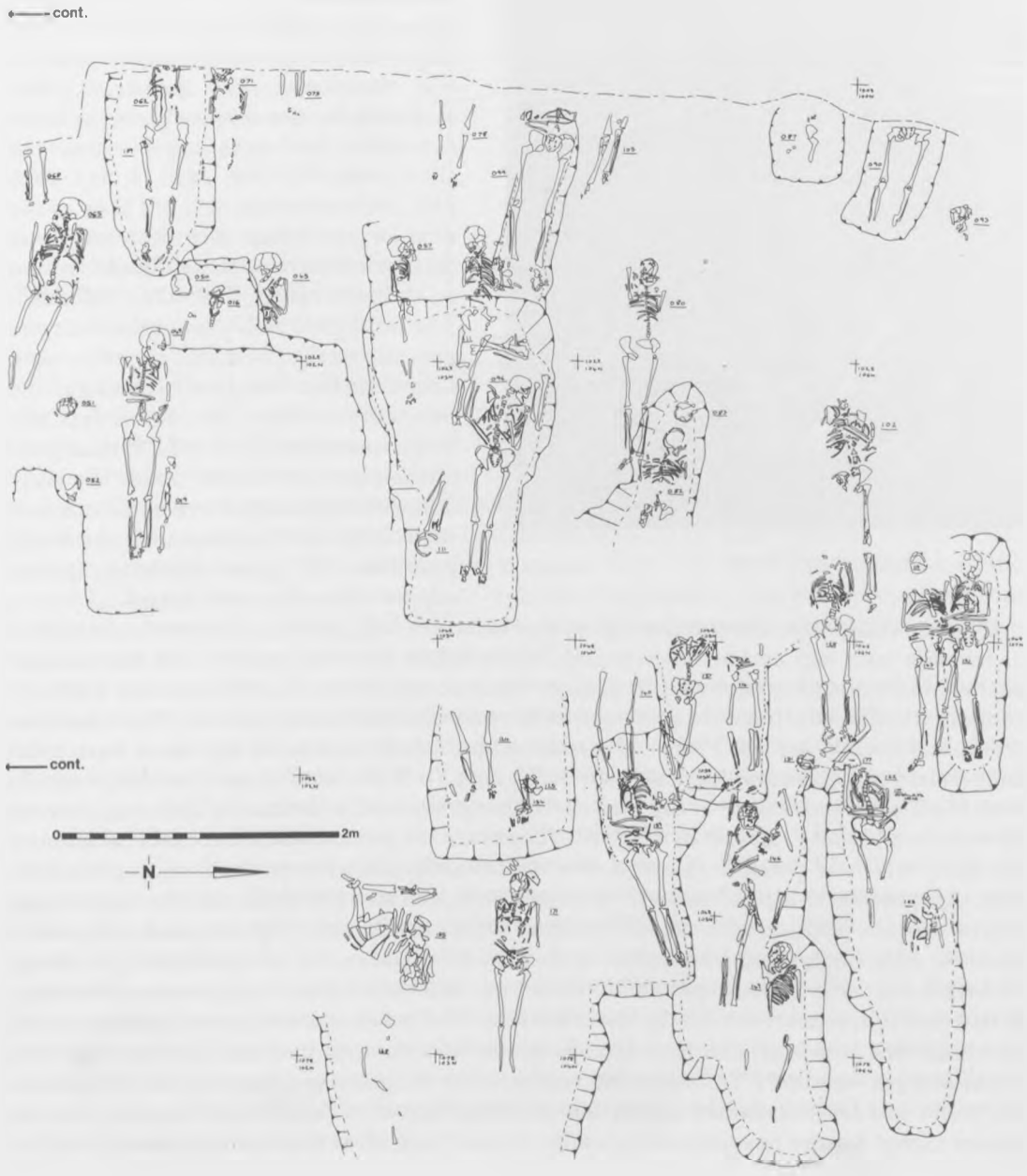


Plate 1: Usk Priory—Charnel Pit.

Burial Practice

Only 33 of the burials were unaffected by later disturbance and therefore allow any analysis of burial practice. Except for three inhumations, all the undisturbed cadavers were buried in a supine position, with their legs extended. They lay with ther heads to the west and their feet to the east. The major difference in the burial practice was the position of the arms. The skeletons in the largest group (twelve examples) had both arms across the chest (*036, 096, 099, 14, 121, 143, 146, 193, 199, 211, 228, 231*). Those of the next largest group (five examples) had their arms flexed so that the hands rested on the pelvis (*965, 171, 177, 208, 240*). The third group (five examples) had one arm across the chest and the other arm flexed so that the hand rested on the pelvis (*048, 096, 159, 162, 214*). Only two inhumations (*217 and 225*) had both of their arms extended beside the body and the remaining seven skeletons had their arms in variations of the basic positions. No grave goods except for copper alloy pins were found.

Of those three exceptions to the supine and extended legs position, one (*057*) was laid on its left side with legs and arms extended. It is possible that this position was due to post-depositional transformation, but it is more likely to represent an accident, with the body being in a coffin which had been placed in the grave in the wrong position. The other two inhumations (*228 and 243*) were of a male and a female and both appear to have been deliberately placed in an unusual position (*see plate 2*). They were in very similar poses. In both burials the skulls were at the west end of the grave and in the case of 228, was covered by a sandstone slab (0.25 x 0.20 x 0.05m). The cranium and mandible were laid back under the slab, and it is possible that this was deliberately placed over the face to protect it, although post-depositional movement cannot be discounted. In both cases the upper torso was in a supine position with the left humerus lying parallel to it. The ulna and radius were flexed at right angles to the humerus, so that the left hand rested on top of the right ilium. The right humerus was also parallel to the torso, with the ulna and radius across the body, so that the right hand rested on the lower left ribs. The pelvis was twisted towards the south, which allowed both legs to be semi-flexed with the knees pointing south. The skeletons were in parallel graves some 1.2m. apart but separated by the grave of a six-year-old child whose sex could not be determined (*234*). No relationships were established between the two graves except for the positions of the cadavers and their close physical proximity.

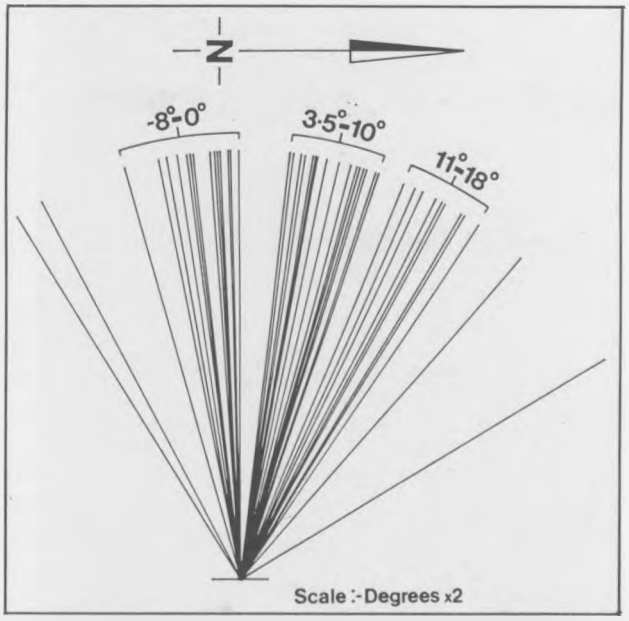


Fig. 4: Usk Priory—Graph indicating Burial Alingment.

The reason for the unusual "laying-out" of these two interments is unknown. The possibility that it was due to rigor mortis, or even that the body had been frozen into position, would appear unlikely. The effects of rigor mortis or freezing would soon wear off and normal burial practices could then have been carried out. The only circumstance in which these conditions could have affected burial would have been if it took place soon after death, but this would appear unlikely as the inhumations were made in a formal cemetery. A similar burial was excavated at the Horsefair Cemetery in Bristol,[14] where it was suggested that this body had been paralysed, although no pathological evidence was produced to confirm this theory. A similar burial position at St Helen-on-the-Walls, Aldwark, York was attributed to the fact that the skeleton was affected by Von Recklinghausen's disease.[15] Although skeleton 228 shows some indications of Paget's disease, skeleton 143 had evidence of neither disease nor paralysis. There are also no indications of unusual bone damage which would indicate physical injury. It would therefore appear to be the deliberate intention of the person laying out the corpses to place these bodies in this position. One can only suggest that it formed some form of ritual, but not of common Christian form, although as only two burials were laid out in this way it seems unlikely.

Coffin remains were found in two instances. In both cases they consisted of carbon staining. Unfortunately the edge of the excavation cut both examples, and therefore their full extent could not be seen. It would appear that they were constructed from wooden planks between 10 and 20mm. in thickness. In other graves large quantities of nails were present, apparently in association with skeletons, but the presence or absence of nails is an unreliable criterion for confirming the presence or absence of coffins. The absence of nails does not indicate the absence of a coffin, as these can be made without. On the other hand the presence of nails might indicate that they were used in some form of revetting of the side of the grave or even a mortuary house, rather than a coffin. For this reason, in the disturbed ground of this cemetery, the presence of nails in an individual grave cannot be taken to confirm the presence of a coffin. No analysis of the number of bodies in coffins can therefore be attempted. Copper alloy pins were found in only one grave (two examples), these were probably shroud pins, but may have been used for pinning together some other form of clothing. Pins by themselves are no indicator of the presence of a shroud, as it is possible for shrouds to be stitched. It is therefore impossible to produce reliable statistics on the use of coffins and shrouds in the cemetery.

Plate 2: Usk Priory—Burial 242, body lying in unusual place.

Summary of Skeletal Material

The skeletal material from the site is unusual in respect of the large number of skulls in comparison to the other bones recovered. Thus a minimum number of individual counts have been conducted by counting crania. Work by Waldron[16] has suggested that it is more likely for the femur to survive than any other bone. In this case perhaps the number of skulls recovered is because the medieval gravediggers treated them with unusual respect. As has been noted above (*p00*), in some cases separate pits were dug to re-inter crania, whilst other bones were backfilled into the open graves. This reburial possibly suggests that a bone or charnel house was not in use in this area of the graveyard, at least for part of the time, as it would have been easier for bones to have been placed in such a building rather than being reburied.

The skeletal material that was recovered comprises a minimum of ninety-three individuals, including the group from the charnel pit. The remains were identified by Dr J. L. Wilkinson, whose report is summarised here.

For statistical purposes only the sixty-five most complete skeletons were considered. Of these thirty were male, twenty-four female and eleven could not be identified. The combined age range was as follows:—

Table 1: Ages of Skeletons

FEMALE|	-5|	-10|	-15|	-20|	-25|	30|	-35|	-40|	-45	-50|
MALE|	0|	1|	0|	1|	4|	4|	9|	10|	1|	0|
FEMALE|	0|	0|	2|	2|	5|	4|	5|	2|	4|	1|
UN-ID|	4|	3|	1|	0|	0|	1|	2|	0|	0|	0|
TOTAL|	4|	4|	3|	3|	9|	8|	16|	12|	5|	1|

The average age of the ageable males present was 33.6 years, with the average female being 31.7. The average age would have been higher if account had been taken of the adult crania which were discovered but these could not be accurately aged and were therefore omitted.

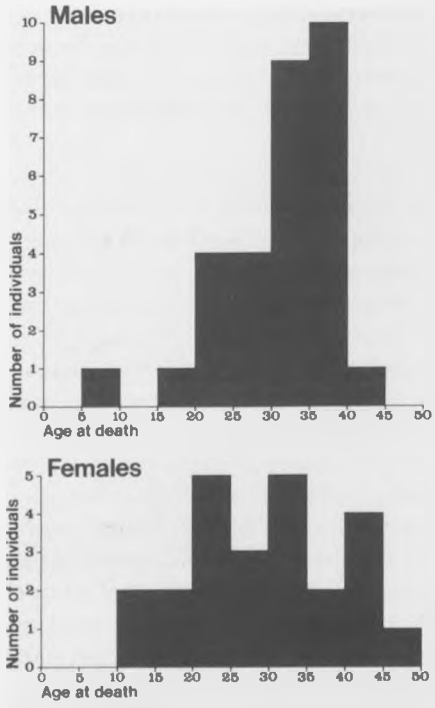


Fig. 5: Usk Priory—Graph showing Age at Death.

The ages at death of the males and females are compared in the graphs (*fig. 8*). Body heights were estimated for seventeen male skeletons and eleven female. The males ranged from 1.61m. (5′ 3½″) to 1.85m. (6′ 1″) with an average height of 1.74m. (5′ 8″). The females ranged from 1.50m. (4′ 11½″) to 1.69m. (5′ 6½″), with an average height of 1.56m. (5′ 2″).

The dental condition of the forty individuals, some or all of whose teeth were examined, was generally very poor. Peridontal disease was present throughout, 7 had dental abscesses, and 2 had hypercementosis.

Sixty per cent of the women over the age of 25 and thirty-seven percent of the men, had spinal arthritis and there was one case (*222*) of arthritis of the hip joint. One individual (*036*) had evidently fallen from a height many years previously, sustaining a compression fracture of the thoracic spine, and a similar injury to one knee joint. There was one well developed case of Paget's disease of the skull (*117*—this individual also had spinal scoliosis and a healed metatarsal fracture) and two (*228, 027*) early cases of this disease.

The most common congenital abnormality was the absence of lower 3rd molars (eight examples); there was one case of absent 2nd premolars and persisting deciduous tooth in situ, one deformed mandible, one mandibular torsus, one persistent metopic suture and occasional wormian skull bones. The infant skeletons were in poor condition. There were eleven of these with the youngest between six and nine months. There was no evidence of any disease in this group.

Discussion

The line of the ditch of the Roman Fortress was projected by Manning as running across the 'Garden of Remembrance',[17] in which case the site would have lain immediately outside the north-eastern corner of the fortress. Excavations in 1988 showed that there was an additional ditch on the northern side of the fortress, similar to that on the south.[18] No traces of this feature were seen in the excavated area, suggesting that it did not continue beyond the corner. It is to be noted that there was no evidence whatsoever for Roman features or finds in the excavated area and this also applied to the graves cut into the first graveyard extension.[19]

The excavated area appeared to have been unoccupied until its use as a graveyard, presumably associated with the Priory. The excavation appears to have uncovered all of the graves at the eastern end of the churchyard. No graves were seen when the foundation trench for a new wall was cut at the southern edge of the site, and none were seen during the building of houses in St Mary's Way.[20] The edge of the cemetery was definitely found on the eastern side, as this area was stripped and no graves were discovered. On the northern

side of the excavated area in an area of graveyard which has been used only in recent years. Mr Mein has maintained a careful watch on this area during the digging of modern graves and has not observed any skeletal material; these observations have been confirmed by the local gravediggers. Therefore the area of the cemetery excavated in 1987 would appear to be isolated from other parts of the medieval graveyard.

The land appears to have been sold with the site of the Presbytery in 1544, and it would therefore appear unlikely that it was part of the parish graveyard, which would have been retained for the use of the parish. Thus it must have been connected with the Priory and convent. The presence of large number of males and children makes it unlikely that this was the main area of burial for the nuns. The latter probably lay south of the church amongst the monastic buildings, of which Priory House, which contains medieval features, may have formed part.

The status of the excavated area of graveyard still requires explanation. If it was not the private burial ground of the inhabitants of the Priory nor part of the parish graveyard, it may represent a private graveyard, given its close proximity to the High Altar. There is no positive evidence, such as widespread congenital abnormality, that it was a "family" plot although this cannot be discounted. It would appear more likely that it represents an area of graveyard set aside for the burial of minor benefactors of the Priory, and those people who were willing to pay for burial. The position of the graves at the east end of the church, close to the rear of the High Altar, would be an area of higher status burials than those in the common graveyard and hence the desire of benefactors to be buried there. The need for payment would account for the low number of children in the excavated area (although this might have been due to the poor survival rate of infant bones in this area), and therefore the high average age of the skeletons. If the sample is biased towards the wealthier members of the community, it cannot be used to draw any overall conclusions about the general population of medieval Usk.

The Graveslab (Fig 6, Plate 3)

The most important artefact discovered in the excavation was a graveslab found over grave 264 which contained the skeleton of a large male (*036*). The head of the stone was towards the west. The graveslab was a tapering slab of medium to coarse-grained quartzite sandstone, constructed in three unequal sections. The three sections had bevelled edges and were 0.14m thick. The individual pieces measured:—

footstone: 0.53m. by 0.36 at the base widening to 0.38m;
middle: 0.81m. by 0.39m widening to 0.42m;
headstone: 0.69m. by 0.42m. widening to 0.45m.

The pieces were joined by rebated joints to form the complete slab which was 2.04m. long and tapered from 0.36 to 0.45m wide. The slab was decorated by an incised cross. On the footstone were depicted calvary steps, upon which rested a thin shaft. The shaft continued across the plain middle slab, before culminating in a cross paty or formy, with central floret (possibly a lily representing purity) on the head slab. The tips of the southern and eastern arms of the cross were joined by an arc, possibly part of a circle representing eternity or even a nimbus, but this is more likely to be a laying out mark which was not removed.

Plate 3: Usk Priory—Details of grave slab.

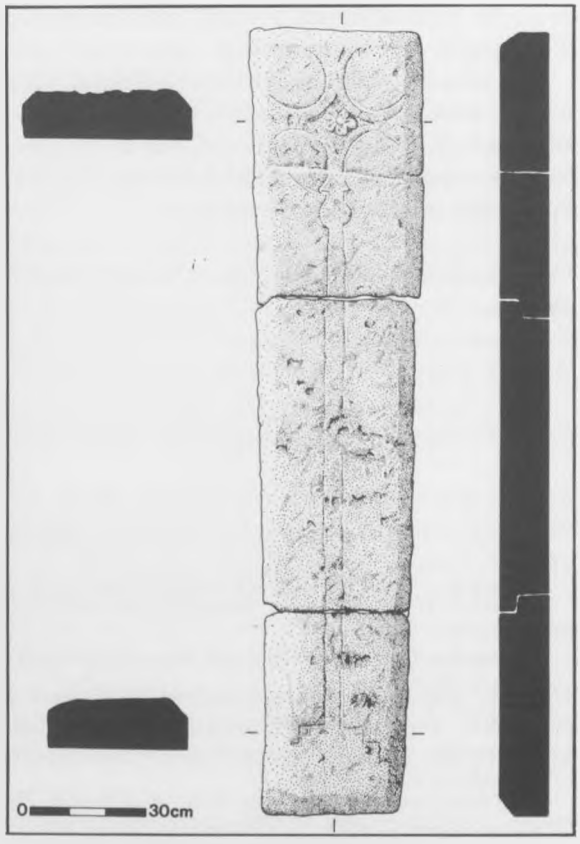


Fig. 6: Usk Priory—Grave Slab.

Direct comparisons with this graveslab have not been possible: the nearest comparable example is the undated "Bishop's Stone" from Dinham, now in Caerwent Church. A more extensive corpus of material in Gloucestershire,[21] suggests that the Usk example dates between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries.

Acknowledgements

The excavation at Usk Priory could not have been undertaken without the assistance, financial and practical, of many individuals and organisations. The Trust is particularly grateful to Cadw: Welsh Historic Monuments, the Manpower Services Commission, Monmouth Borough Council, Withey Construction Ltd and the incumbent of St Mary's Church, the Rev. R. L. Davies. The excavation was completed by the efforts and dedication of too many people to name, but the author is particularly grateful to Mr A. G. Mein who made available his extensive knowlege of medieval Usk. Mr A. G. Marvell, the Project Manager of the Glamorgan—Gwent Archaeological Trust's Gwent Excavation Project, gave much valuable advice during the excavation, Ms J. Compton helped with the supervisory work, Dr J. L. Wilkinson reported on the human remains, and Mr G. Dowdell,

Dr E. M. Evans, Mr S. J. Parry and Mr P. F. Wilkinson assisted during the preparation of this paper. Its shortcomings remain, however, the responsibility of the author.

The human remains recovered during this excavation have been re-interred in the present cemetery at Usk and the detailed archive of this excavation along with the very small collection of artifacts recovered will be lodged with Monmouth Museum Service. Apart from the report on the graveslab it is felt that these artifacts do not warrant publication, but reports are included in the archive.

The Association is indebted to Cadw: Welsh Historic Monuments for a grant in aid of publication of this article.

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USK PRIORY: AN UNRECORDED EXCAVATION

By GEOFFREY MEIN.

The excavations by the Glamorgan-Gwent Archaeological Trust in Usk during 1987 included some work which brought to light a forgotten graveyard which had probably formed part of the Benedictine nunnery of Usk. The report on this work by Mr. C. N. Maylan makes it opportune now to record some work carried out nearby, twenty-five years ago, by two members of the Association.

The recent work by the Trust comprised the exploration of the area now in use as the second extension to the Usk parish churchyard. The area formed part of what used to be known locally as "the Dukes Yard", and which had latterly been used by Messrs. G. & H. James as a vehicle repair garage. It lay between the houses in St. Mary's Way to the south and the churchyard to the north, its western boundary being the wall at the east end of the garden to rest of St. Mary's Priory Church.

This garden had since 1899 formed part of the garden of 'The Priory', the largely Victorian pile acquired in that year by the Rickards family who continued to live there until the death, in January 1939, of Robert Windsor Rickards. The Rickards estate in Usk was broken up in the mid-1960's, the small garden area being sold to Mrs. Alice Eddowes of Usk. Mrs. Eddowes, an aunt of Rudge Humphreys of The Castle, Usk, had bought the land with the intention of presenting it to St. Mary's Church, and this she did, some months later, in September 1964.[1] This estate had until then continued to represent the core of the lands of the Benedictines in Usk, 'The Priory' incorporating the few remaining fragmentary walls of part of the conventual buildings, perhaps of the dorter or the prioress's lodgings.

Mrs. Eddowes' solicitor was the late Isca Bowen, one of the Association's former Presidents and a native of Usk. He and his friend, Rudge Humphreys, also a member of the Association and with whom he had done some archaeological work previously, promptly seized the chance, with Mrs. Eddowes' permission, to carry out a small excavation on this land during the few months of her ownership. What follows here is from contemporary notes made by me of the story as recounted to me by Rudge Humphreys some time before his death in June 1985. Where possible, details have since been checked by me with those still alive who saw their work in progress, or who were involved in the other contemporary discovery recorded here.

The object of their investigation was to test the theory published in 1886 by Stephen W. Williams[2] that the east end of the monastic church had lain approximately 28ft, east of the tower.[3] This was felt by both Bowen and Humphreys to be unlikely in that even the superficial feel and look of the surface of the ground for some seventy-five feet east of the tower and over a width equal to that of the nave of the present church strongly suggested, as it still does, that the whole area had been built upon, and not merely the western third. They felt that the stone wall dividing the proposed garden of rest from the kitchen garden and vinery of 'The Priory' probably marked the extreme east end of the original building, although they knew that the wall itself was of the nineteenth century. Thus it was not there when William Coxe's map of Usk was drawn in 1800, but it was there by the time of the Usk tithe map of 1846. Examination of the wall showed that it did not incorporate any part of an older standing structure and that its builders did not seem to have re-used any stonework

salvaged from the remains of the monastery. The ground to the west of the wall did not have the same compacted feel as that to the west; furthermore, there was no local recollection of anyone having encountered substantial walls below ground when digging in the kitchen garden.

It was decided to test Williams' theory by digging a trench 4ft. wide from north to south across the area and about half-way between the east face of the church tower and the wall bounding the garden. Years later Rudge Humphreys could not remember precisely where they had dug it, but its line can still just be seen 36ft. (*c.* 11,75m.) to the east of the tower. It became immediately apparent to the excavators that they were correct in assuming that the building had extended further east than Williams had suggested, but that it had been largely robbed out. Little remained of either of the main north or south walls until they were about two feet down, when they came upon the ashlar facing and the mortared river boulder filling of both walls. They did not get to the bottom of the footings. The floor of the building had been robbed completely and while the demolition level comprising fragments of stone slabs and mortar was identified at depth of about 1ft. (*c.* 30 cms.) there were no monastic tiles or fragments of them, nor any sherds of pottery. Since then my own examination of several of the small holes dug for the interment of cremated ashes in this garden has confirmed the existence of this layer of scattered mortar at 30 cms. below the turf.

Rudge Humphreys said that at a point 'a few feet south of the north chancel wall bones were encountered'. An extension of the trench to the east and the west 'revealed the outline of a grave, lying east-west, and the lower portions (i.e. the legs) of what we thought, because of their size, to be those of a man. The rest of the skeleton had disappeared due to the acidity of the soil, and as there was no stone cist it was assumed that the burial had been in a wooden coffin which had also rotted. Despite careful search no grave goods were found'. It is worth noting from Rudge Humphreys' words that they do not seem to have found any iron nails; perhaps the burial was merely in a shroud. The present vicar, the Revd. Rendle Davies, did not see the remains *in situ* and could not form any view as to their probable sex from the disarticulated bones which were given to him for reburial. He remembers being told that they lay with their feet to the west, suggesting to him and the excavators that, if the post-Reformation custom of burying priests facing their congregation had held good in earlier days, they had an interesting find for a nunnery. The trench was then deepened along its whole length to the level of the bottom of this grave but no other graves were found and the trench was backfilled. It seems likely that the rectangular depression still clearly visible lying west-east in the centre of the area represents the site of this burial. The remains were re-interred by the Vicar in the churchyard, along with the other human bones which had by coincidence just been dug up over the garden wall.

It seems that while our members were busy on one side of the wall, on the other side the Messrs. James were having an inspection pit dug for the garage business which, as tenants of the Council, they had just started on the Duke's Yard. This pit lay east-west and cut straight down on to a grave containing 'the larger part of a very large skeleton'. The workmen put the bones, 'the skull and all', into a sack and left them (during their mid-day break) on the doorstep of Usk police station. The story is that they delayed ringing Sergeant Dorning until late afternoon to keep him in suspense as long as they dared as to whose bones they were, and how they got there. He visited the Duke's Yard and saw the grave, reported the find to the coroner and had the bones examined by the police pathologist. No inquest was deemed necessary, but the surprise came with the report which stated that the remains were

those of a male adult negro. The records were long ago destroyed, so that it is not known whether any other information was obtained as to the man's health and so on, but presumably it was the teeth which gave the clue as to the man's race. It is the oddity of this man's presence in Usk and the fact that his was the first grave to be found in what has recently turned out to be a forgotten medieval burial ground that makes his passing worth recording.

Whose were the remains found by our two members in such a significant position in the monastic chancel, and what was their date, must remain unknown as dating methods were not readily available in 1964. All that can be said is that the tentative hope long nursed by Rudge Humphreys that he might have found the remains of the town's most famous son, Adam of Usk, is not supported by the documentary evidence. Adam, who died a couple of months after making his will on 20th January 1429/30 and leaving a small bequest to each of the sisters in the priory, specifically asked that his body be buried in the parish church of Usk before the image of the Blessed Virgin Mary, presumably in a Lady Chapel which we cannot now identify.[4]

NOTES

[1]Conveyance (14th February 1964): Monica Mary Dorores Rickards, widow of Hove, to Alice Dorothy Forman Eddowes; Conveyance (17th September 1964): Mrs. A. D. F. Eddowes to The Representative Body of the Church in Wales. Both conveyed the land marked Lot 7 on the Rickards Estate sale particulars plan reproduced on the Conveyance (11th March 1965) from Mrs. M. M. D. Rickards to Usk U.D.C. of the Duke's Yard and Vine Cotage, Four Ash Street, Usk. This formed Lot 2 and included the present site of St. Mary's Way, conveyed to Messrs. Hughes Bros. (Usk) Ltd. by the Usk U.D.C. (13th December 1966). The author gratefully acknowledges the assistance of the solicitors for the Representative Body and for the Monmouth Borough Council respectively for these details.

[2]For Stephen Williams, see: Fenn and Sinclair in *Trans. Radnorshire Society* LIX (1989), and Williams, David H. in *Montgomeryshire Collections* 80 (1992).

[3]Williams, S. W. 'Architectural Notes upon Usk Church', *Arch. Camb.* XL (1886). The square-ended presbytery on the plan appears to have been an afterthought. His first attempt shows apsidal east walls to the presbytery and to both the transepts. This plan was published in *The Architect*, and is reproduced in the current *Guide* to the church prepared by the former Vicar, Canon D. I. Jones, who died in 1963. His successor, the present incumbent, published the guide soon after. Neither of them were aware of the different plan published in *Arch. Camb.* eighty years previously.

[4]Thompson, E. M. (edit.), *Chronicon Adae de Usk, 1377-1421* (O. U. P., 1904), pp. xxix-xxxi. Adam wrote: *'corpusque meum ad sepeliendum in ecclesia parochiali de Usk, coram imagine beate Marie virgine'.*

GWENT SEALS: V

Personal Seals found in 1992.

By RODNEY HUDSON and DAVID H. WILLIAMS.

Mr. Richard Jones of New Inn, using a metal detector, has brought into Newport Museum for identification two lead-alloy seal matrices, both of them being (as such metal allows) in a good state of preservation.

Both are similar in other respects: in the date of their engraving (perhaps later thirteenth to early fourteenth century) and consequently in the 'Lombardic Capital' script employed in their legends; and in their size (a diameter of 27 or 28mm.) They differ in a very important aspect, that of origin. The first listed here, the seal of Eve, daughter of Kederid, is clearly of a Welsh lady, and was found in the parish of Llanfihangel Gobion (at NGR: SO 3495 0945), but may have been mislaid whilst travelling, as the find-spot is close to the main Raglan-Abergavenny routeway. The provenance of the second, that of William of Combe, also suggests that it was lost by its owner on a journey, this time into Wales (perhaps as pilgrim or merchant) from the South of England. The place-name 'Combe' occurs in Devon, Gloucestershire, Hampshire, Oxfordshire, Somerset, Surrey and Warwickshire, and, joined by a prefix or suffix, also in Dorset and Wiltshire. This matrix was found, barely a mile south of the first find, in the parish of Llanfair Kilgedin (in the northern part of grid square: SO 3407). Seals discovered so far away from the domicile of their owner are of value in indicating the routes of journeys taken by medieval travellers. Both matrices have now been acquired by Newport Museum.

Seal of Eve, daugher of Kederid.

Obverse

Reverse

Impression

Later 13th C. 9.4 gms., circ., 27 mm.

A stylised fleur-de-lis.

+ S' EVE' FIL' KEDERID

Location: Newport Museum, Gwent (Acc. No: 92.24).

Seal of William of Combe.

Observe

Reverse

Impression

Perhaps about 1270 to 1320 14.6 gms., circ., 28mm.

A bush or tree, + S' WILL'I · DE CVMBE

Location: Newport Museum, Gwent (Acc. No: 92.91).

REVIEWS

A Guide to Ancient and Historic Wales: Glamorgan and Gwent. By Elisabeth Whittle. viii + 217 pp., illus., 210 x 147mm. London: HMSO for Cadw: Welsh Historic Monuments, 1992. ISBN 0-11-701221-1. £11.95.

This new series, under the general editorship of Dr Sian Rees, who is also the author of the Dyfed volume, provides brief descriptions of the main archaeological and historic sites in the Principality. Each volume consists of a gazetteer of 150 sites arranged in eight chronological chapters, and in the book under review about one third of the sites are located in Gwent. Following the guidance as to how the reader should use the book, there is a brief introduction which leads in to the gazetteers. The first four chapters cover the prehistoric periods, whilst the next two are devoted to the Roman and early Medieval eras. The final chapters cover the Middle Ages, from 1066 up to about the time of the Acts of Union (1536/43), one being on the castles and settlements, the other ecclesiastical and miscellaneous sites. A further eleven pages examine other sites of interest, with very brief descriptions, and then there comes a useful summary of key dates, with, at the end, a glossary, bibiliography and a thorough index.

The amount of text allocated to each site varies considerably, according to the monument. The first Gwent site (*No. 11* in the gazetteer) appears in the Bronze Age chapter, namely the round cairns near Blaenavon, and has just nine short lines, but the two hillforts near Llanfihangel Crucorney (*Nos. 49 & 50*) are treated in more detail, as are the other hillforts in the county. The entries for Caerleon and Caerwent (*Nos. 66 & 67*) are assigned seven pages, as befits such sites of national importance, and naturally the great medieval monuments in Gwent are treated in some depth. In many cases it is useful to have these summaries rather than having to wade through a guide book to a site, but what helps to guarantee the success of this series, whether the reader is a serious student or a general traveller, is that each volume includes sites on which information is hard to find without having to resort to a good library.

Each entry begins with the name of the site, what it is (castle, hillfort, standing stone etc.), its date, the number of the Ordnance Survey 1:50,000 map, grid reference, and then, most important, details of access. The editor of the series is to be congratulated on ensuring that a rating is assigned to each site (from 1 to 4) informing the reader how accessible a particular monument is, "1" being for easy access, including wheelchairs, and "4" for able-bodied only.

The main disappointment in the Glamorgan/Gwent volume is the map on page 217; it should have been spread over two pages to make it easier to use. One would have expected to have seen Jeremy Knight's article on Newport Castle, which appeared in our journal, cited on page 143. The A5 format is handier for the traveller than the sizes adopted by the English and Scottish equivalents to this series, but the main drawback to the Welsh volumes is that they do not cover the post-medieval and modern periods, except for the opening decades of the former. Nevertheless, these small cavils apart, *Glamorgan and Gwent* is easy to use, well written and well illustrated, and a book which should be on the shelves of all Association members. Liz Whittle deserves our thanks and congratulations.

John R. Kenyon

Schools in Wales 1500-1900: A Social and Architectural History. By Malcolm Seaborne, 273pp., 31 figs., 61 plates., 12 tables., hardback, 215 x 140mm. Denbigh: Gee and Sons, Ltd., 1992. ISBN 0-7074-02220. £15.00.

A well-researched volume and a welcome addition to Welsh educational literature, drawing together as it does many individual studies. The grammar school at Abergavenny (*fd. 1543*) appears as perhaps the earliest lasting such foundation in Wales. There is a full account of the emergence of

endowed schools throughout the seventeenth century, ranging from Chepstow (*1605*) to Trellech (*1691*). Of particular interest to your reviewer is the mention of James Powell's School at Bassaleg (*fd. 1675*). There is, too, a comprehensive review of Charles Williams' School at Caerleon (*fd. 1724*). The work of the National Society receives full coverage, commencing in Monmouthshire, in the author's view, in 1814 when part of the medieval priory building in Monmouth itself was used as a National school. In fact, a National school appears to have been established in Usk two years previously, with James Davies as master. There is note of the educational establishments of other denominations: Baptist (*1732:* an academy at Trosnant, Pontypool); Congregational (*1757:* an academy at Abergavenny), and Roman Catholic (*1857*: St Mary's School, Newport). The non-denominational Board Schools are also considered, whilst of especial interest were the Works Schools, a by-product of the Industrial Revolution, at Blaenafon (*1816*) and Pontypool (*1857*).

The notable architects, with a number of schools to their credit, included the partners John Prichard and John Seddon of Llandaff, who designed mostly National Schools, and E. A. Lansdowne of Newport who concentrated on Board Schools. Amongst others, the former had to their credit: Magor (*1856*), Marshfield (*1857*) and Llanelen (*1862*); the latter: Griffithstown (*1874*), Abersychan (*1882*), and Duke St., Newport (*1885*). Following the Welsh Intermediate Act of 1889, the last decade of the nineteenth century saw a considerable provision for secondary education with eight County Intermediate Schools in Monmouthshire by 1900; added to which there was the contribution of the Haberdashers' Company at West Mon, Pontypool, and in Monmouth. There is much of interest in this book: the foundation of the grammar school in St. John's Church, Abergavenny, meant that the former priory church became the parish church; grey uniforms were worn by the scholars at Caerleon alms-house school (*1717*); six private schools in Gwent offered boarding facilities (*1835*), and when Cwm Ffrwd Board School was planned, it was realised that to build in brick would cost more than using stone (*1880*).

Of necessity, in a work dealing with Wales in general, the references to schools in Gwent are limited. It is worth noting therefore, with future researchers in mind, that at least two collections of manuscripts at the National Library have much to offer: the Llangibby Deeds (as, for example, *LL/MISC/447-8,* a 1746 history of the Free Grammar School at Usk), and the Tredegar Park Deeds (as, amongst others, *Box 21, No. 85,* an 1873 history of Machen School). Amidst other educational material, these two groups also contain some documents relating to the appointment of masters. Occasional references occur elsewhere: the Bradney Papers (*NLW, MS 7641D*) note that the Market House at Grosmont was used for 'the teaching of a public school', (this in 1704, well ante-dating the school endowed there in 1810—*Seaborne p. 90*); and *Plas-yn-cefn MS 2725* (of 1708) notes the four charity schools lately set up in the town of Monmouth. The National Society records are no longer held at Church House, Westminster (*Seaborne, p. 87n*) but by the Church of England Record Society, Bermondsey. The applications for grant aid that they contain throw considerable light on the prevailing state of local education.

To the very full bibliography might well be added: Vivian, M. A. and others, *The Jubilee Book of the Newport High School for Girls, 1896-1946* (Newport: R. H. Johns, Ltd; 1946), and Philipps, Sir Thomas, *The Life of James Davies, a village schoolmaster* (London: Parker, 1850; 2nd. and revised edition, 1852). If there is a fault in Dr. Seaborne's book, it is that its bias leans heavily towards the architectural rather than the social history of Welsh schools; both of which are implied in its title. It is much to be hoped that the author may write a companion volume telling more of the pupils, the day-to-day problems and successes, and something of the notable headmasters. James Davies who established schools at Usk (*1812*), Devauden (*1815*), and Llangattock Lingoed (*1847*), is a case in point. Famous in the annals of Gwent educational history, the very nature of Dr Seaborne's admirable work relegates him to a bibliographical reference.

David H. Williams

FIELD EXCURSIONS, 1992

Saturday, May 23rd: Industrial archaeology was the theme of our day in Merthyr Tydfil, arranged by the Merthyr Tydfil Heritage Trust, whose Director, Mrs. Jane Pearson, introduced an excellent audio-visual presentation on Merthyr's industrial history at the newly restored Ynysfach Engine House. We then visited the site of Cyfarthfa Ironworks, interpreted for us by Mr. Jeremy Knight. After lunch in Cyfarthfa Park, overlooking the town and the ironworks, we toured the Cyfarthfa Castle Museum, once the home of William Crawshay II, and now housing a comprehensive history of Merthyr Tydfil in its varied galleries. At 4, Chapel Row, birthplace of the composer Dr. Joseph Parry, we saw an excellent photographic record of the landmarks in Merthyr's history and, outside, the scant remains of the Glamorganshire Canal. Before tea at the Brecon Mountain Railway, where, sadly, we could no more than look at the little train, we toured the Dowlais area to see the Dowlais Stables, blast engine house and Guest Memorial Hall. Our last visit of a very enjoyable day was to St. Tydfil's Church, on the site of St. Tydfil's reputed martyrdom, to see the two Early Christian memorial stones housed there.

Saturday, September 19th: Our first stop on this lovely autumn day was at Kempley, to visit the two very different churches. The attractive modern church of St. Edward the Confessor is a good example of the Arts and Crafts movement, while the peaceful little church of St. Mary is memorable for its well-preserved wall paintings of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. At Dymock, an attractive village with Roman origins and more recent associations with the Dymock Poets, we had lunch and looked at the church of St. Mary the Virgin, with its rich Norman sculpture. At Eastnor Castle, a splendid Norman revival castle of 1812, we tramped the endless stone corridors and staircases, marvelling at the collections of furniture, armour and paintings, as well as the enthusiastic stories of our guide about the latest filming at the castle of films and television series, after which a home-made tea in the stables and a walk around the peaceful gardens were very welcome.

Evening Outings: We were fortunate in having good weather for most of our evening outings, thus ensuring respectable attendances. At Coed-y-Caerau, Mr. David Zienkiewicz led an enthusiastic group around the native hillfort and Roman auxiliary fort overlooking Caerleon. A highlight of the evening was the conveyance of members to the hilltop site by tractor! We visited Glyn Pits, Pontypool, where Mr. Jeremy Knight gave us the history of the nineteenth-century coal mine, where both pumping and winding engines are still *in situ*. Mr. John Thickins supplied colourful local anecdotes to augment the account. At Thornwell, Chepstow, Mr. Gwilym Hughes showed members prehistoric barrows and Romano-British enclosures revealed by excavation in advance of house-building. Wyndcliffe Court, St. Arvans, the home of Mr. and Mrs. Clay, overlooks Chepstow racecourse, built by Mr. Clay's grandfather. Here we explored the extensive Arts and Crafts garden and marvelled at Mrs. Clay's energy in tending it. Several of us were delighted to receive a gift of a plant to bring home. The final visit of the season, on a stormy night, was to Llanthony Secunda Manor, Caldicot, the home of Mr. and Mrs. Stuart Cliffe. A large, late medieval L-shaped house with probable monastic connections, it was refurbished in the seventeenth century and saved from extinction in the twentieth, though now sadly stripped of all its lands.

G.V.J.

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