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Front cover: The Abergavenny Priory Jesse in a photograph published by this association in 1872. *See* Morgan, O. (1872); footnote 7 of Muriel Adams' 'A Study of the magnificent remnant of a Tree of Jesse at St Mary's Priory Church, Abergavenny: Part One'.

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ROMANO-BRITISH AND MEDIEVAL OCCUPATION AT SUDBROOK ROAD, PORTSKEWETT, MONMOUTHSHIRE: EXCAVATIONS IN 2009

By Mark Brett, Neil Holbrook and E.R. McSloy
with contributions by Sarah Cobain, Jonny Geber and Rachel Ives

Excavation on an elevated promontory projecting into the Caldicot Level revealed archaeological remains ranging from the Neolithic period onwards, although the main periods of activity lay within the later Roman and later medieval periods. A number of Roman and medieval banks and ditches enclosed the higher part of the site. A single human inhumation was radiocarbon-dated to the seventh to eighth centuries and a substantial thirteenth or fourteenth-century stone malting kiln was also found.

INTRODUCTION

Between August and October 2009 Cotswold Archaeology (CA) carried out an archaeological excavation for Barratt Homes (South Wales) on land at Sudbrook Road, Portskewett, Monmouthshire (centred on ST 4997 8805; Fig. 1) in advance of development.

The site lies largely on a promontory of Triassic sandstone which separates the eastern and western portions of the reclaimed alluvial wetlands of the Caldicot Level (BGS 1981). It occupies the northern side of an alluviated stream valley which drains into the river Neddern to the west. The site slopes significantly from north to south, from *c*. 14m to *c*. 6.5m above Ordnance Datum (AOD). Prior to development, the western part of the site was enclosed on the northern and eastern sides by low banks, visible as earthworks.

The site is situated within the medieval core of the village, close to a group of earthworks known as 'Harold's House' (PRN 505; Figs. 1 and 2). These were investigated in 2007 during evaluation by Channel 4's *Time Team* (WA 2007; Thompson and Birbeck 2010), and evidence for the substantial and extensive structures of a medieval manorial complex was identified.

It is possible that there was formerly a harbour at the head of the river Neddern to the south-west of Harold's House. Prior to canalisation in the post-medieval period, the Neddern was a significant tidal inlet of the Severn which entered the estuary near Sudbrook. The promontory fort at Sudbrook doubtless indicates that this was an important crossing point of the Severn from at least the late Iron Age, and that this continued to be the case into the Roman period is indicated by a road (Margary 1973, 60aa) which branched off the main coastal route between Chepstow and Caerwent. The line of the road is followed by Crick Road to the north-west of Portskewett. To the south-east it presumably continued to Sudbrook, where occupation within the fort continued until the fourth century AD (Nash Williams 1939; Sell 2001). Other Roman activity in the vicinity includes a substantial building on Portskewett Hill, 0.7km to the north of the site (Wheeler 1923; fig. 1), and Caerwent 4km to the north-west.

There is documentary evidence for the importance of Portskewett in the early medieval period, as a site of the *llys* of the kings of Gwent from the sixth century (Knight 2004, 282–3), and as a port (Edwards and Lane 1988, 108–9). The *Anglo Saxon Chronicle* recounts that Earl Harold Godwinson had begun building a hunting lodge at Portskewett, on a site traditionally identified as 'Harold's House', however on the feast of St Bartholomew in 1065 a raid on the site was launched by Caradog ap Gruffydd, one of the princes of Gwent, who killed almost all the workmen there and carried away materials (Swanton 1997).

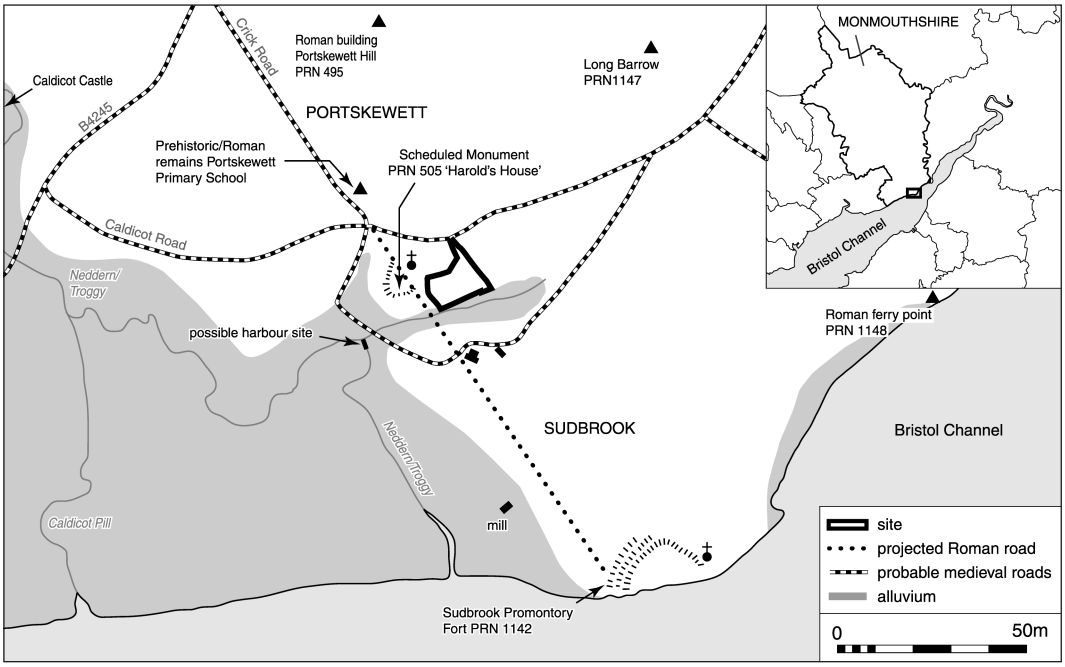

Fig. 1: Sudbrook Road, Portskewett, site location.

Although no archaeological deposits were known within the proposed development area, the Curatorial Division of the Glamorgan Gwent Archaeological Trust (GGAT) considered that the site had archaeological potential because of its topographical location along the margin of the Caldicot Level and its proximity to 'Harold's House'. A number of sites dating from the Roman period, when the Gwent Levels were first drained for agricultural use, have been identified at similar locations along the fen edge (Rippon 1996). An archaeological evaluation of the site in 1995 (GGAT 1995) identified medieval earthworks, cut features and structures in the western part of the site. An assemblage of Roman artefacts, all residual in medieval deposits, included pottery of probable third-century AD date, five coins with a date range of *c*. AD 270–350 and ceramic building material, including fragments of *opus signinum*. The evaluation concluded that the medieval remains may have either formed part of the manorial complex focussed on 'Harold's House' or an outlying part of the medieval village of Portskewett. The Roman artefacts suggested proximity to a substantial Roman structure which probably lay outside of the boundaries of the site.

Excavation methodology

In the light of the evaluation results and in compliance with a condition of planning consent for the development, Barratt Homes (South Wales) commissioned CA to excavate an area of 0.36ha, contained within extant earthwork banks to the south and east (Fig. 2). A mitigation strategy was devised, which comprised the archaeological supervision of mechanical ground reduction of the excavation area. All features exposed were excavated by hand and recorded in accordance with a written specification produced by CA and approved by GGAT on behalf of Monmouthshire County

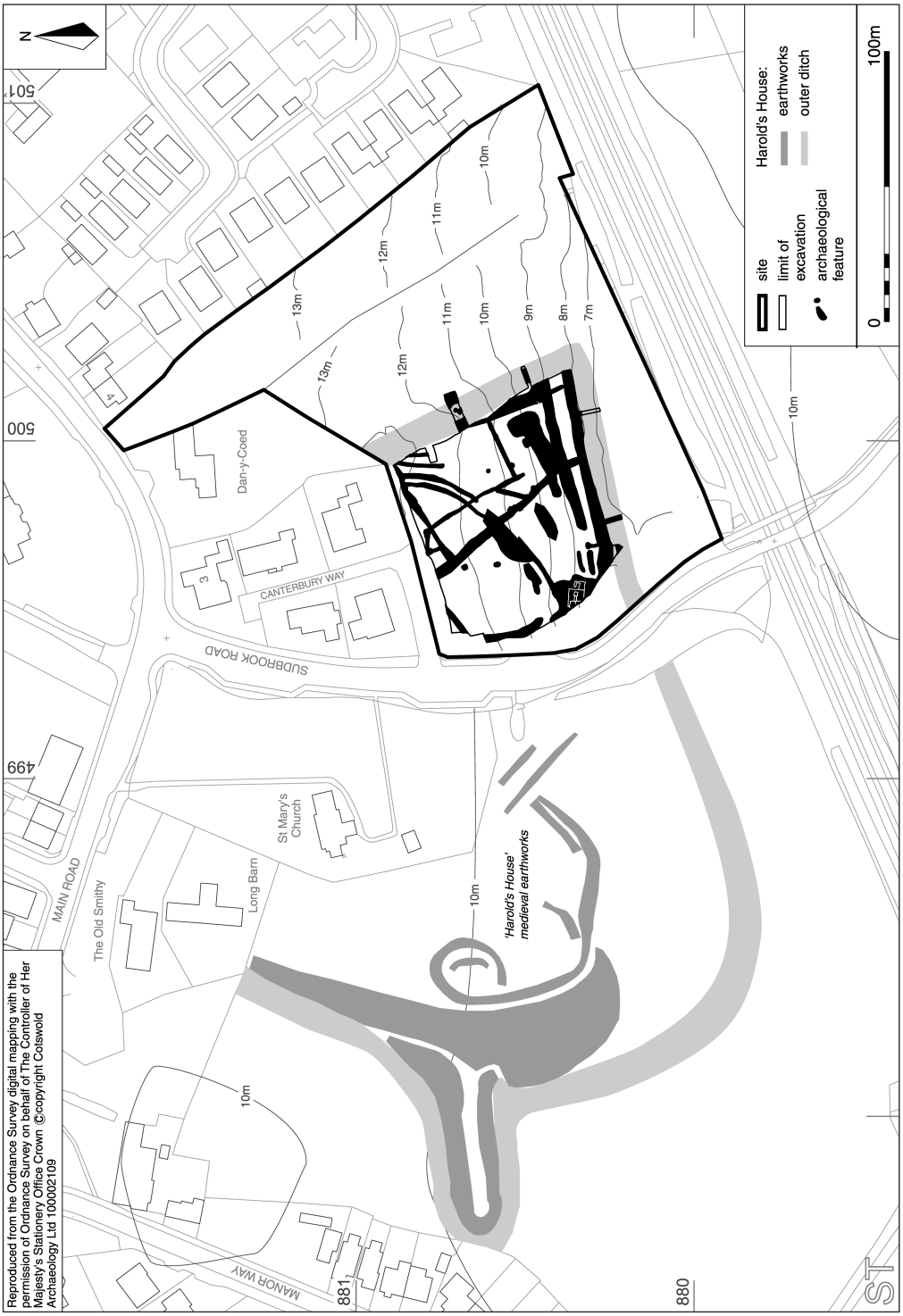

Fig. 2: Medieval earthworks and cut features in relation to 'Harolds House' site.

Council. A maximum of 50 per cent of the fills of all discrete features, such as postholes and pits, and 20 per cent samples of all ditches and gullies were excavated, targeting intersections, overlaps and terminals. In addition to bulk sampling of selected deposits, three monolith samples were taken through two depositional sequences for geoarchaeological analysis. The results of the analysis are incorporated in the results; a full report is available in the archive (ARCA 2009).

EXCAVATION RESULTS (Figs 2–5)

The identification of key relationships, and the allocation of individual features to periods, was achieved through the combined analysis of the site stratigraphy, spatial patterning of features, fill characteristics, the ceramic evidence and other categories of artefactual material. Three broad chronological periods were identified.

Period 1: Roman (mid–late second to mid–late fourth centuries AD)
Period 2: Post-Roman/medieval (sixth century AD to fourteenth century)
Period 3: Post-medieval/modern (eighteenth century to present)

The overwhelming majority of features have been assigned to the Roman and post-Roman/medieval periods (Periods 1 and 2). The long-lived nature of the majority of the ceramic assemblage relating to each of these periods did little to enhance chronological distinction between contexts associated with each of these two main periods, however a degree of sub-phasing has been elucidated by key stratigraphical relationships.

Removal of the modern topsoil and subsoil deposits revealed a transverse natural ridge of outcropping sandstone, *c*. 15m wide, extending south-west to north-east through the central part of the site. To the south of this layers of alluvium and colluvium were identified along the lowest part of the site.

Period 1: Roman (mid–late second to mid–late fourth centuries AD)

The earliest archaeological features encountered on site dated to the Roman period. However, prehistoric activity on the site was indicated by the recovery of a small assemblage of struck flint flakes or chips of broadly later prehistoric date, also including a flake from a Neolithic ground axe in a fine-grained igneous or metamorphic rock (Period 1 ditch fill 201) and a sherd of late prehistoric (Bronze Age or Iron Age) pottery, as well as a fragment of a Late Bronze Age socketed axe. In all but one instance (context 006 within ditch 007), these artefacts were found alongside quantities of Roman and medieval material.

Period 1a: middens (mid–late second century AD)

Located along the southern edge of the sandstone outcrop, deposit 015 appears to represent the remnants of an early Roman midden. It survived to approximately 12m in length, 3m in width and 0.35m in height and comprised brown sandy silt and stone rubble containing finds of animal bone, ceramic building material, including *imbrex*, *tegula* and brick, and 689 sherds of pottery totalling over 8.6kg in weight, dating the deposit to the mid to late second century AD. A similar deposit 225, located approximately 4.5m to the south-east of deposit 015 may represent the remains of a further midden of contemporary date, although finds were much less abundant. Although physically separated from it by medieval ditch 027, deposit 225 is presumed to have been incorporated into the later Roman bank 037 on the eastern side of this ditch.

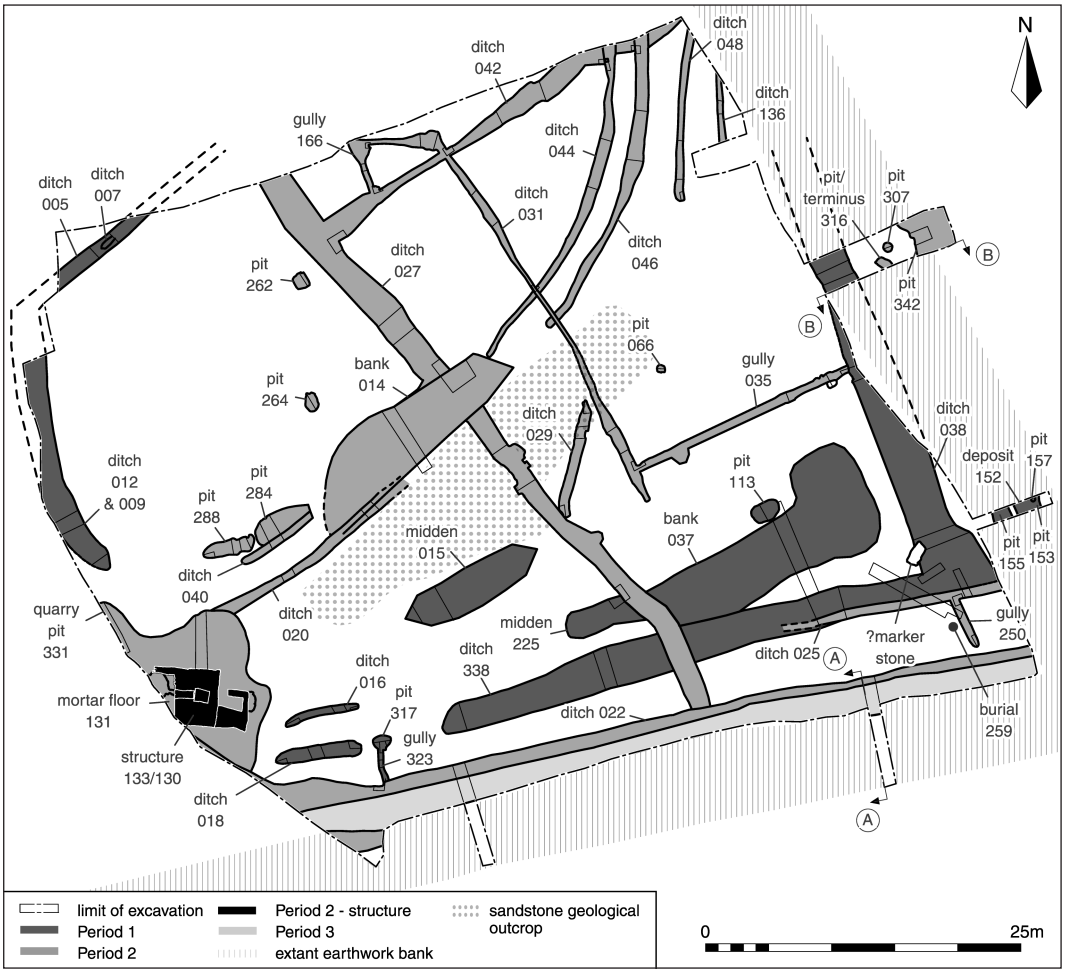

Fig. 3: Periods 1, 2 and 3 phase plan (1:600).

Period 1b: enclosure ditches and other ditches and a pit (second to late third to fourth centuries AD)
Along the low-lying, southern part of the site the natural substrate was overlain by alluvial deposits of silty sand (Fig. 4; Section AA). Although only measuring up to 0.1m in thickness, numerous finds were recovered from this material, including pottery dated to the third to fourth centuries AD. The alluvium was, in turn, sealed by material likely to have formed from the combined effects of alluviation and colluviation, confirmed by geoarchaeological analysis of monolith samples of this sequence. This secondary material also contained numerous Roman finds, including pottery and animal bone. Further upslope, south of the sandstone outcrop, the natural clayey silt substrate was overlain by colluvium, up to 0.3m thick, which contained later Roman pottery and other artefacts.

Within the south-eastern part of the site, a substantial v-shaped ditch 038/338 defined the broadly right-angled corner of an enclosure. The ditch was at least 4m wide and 1.5m deep and appears to have gradually silted up following construction. During this process, considerable

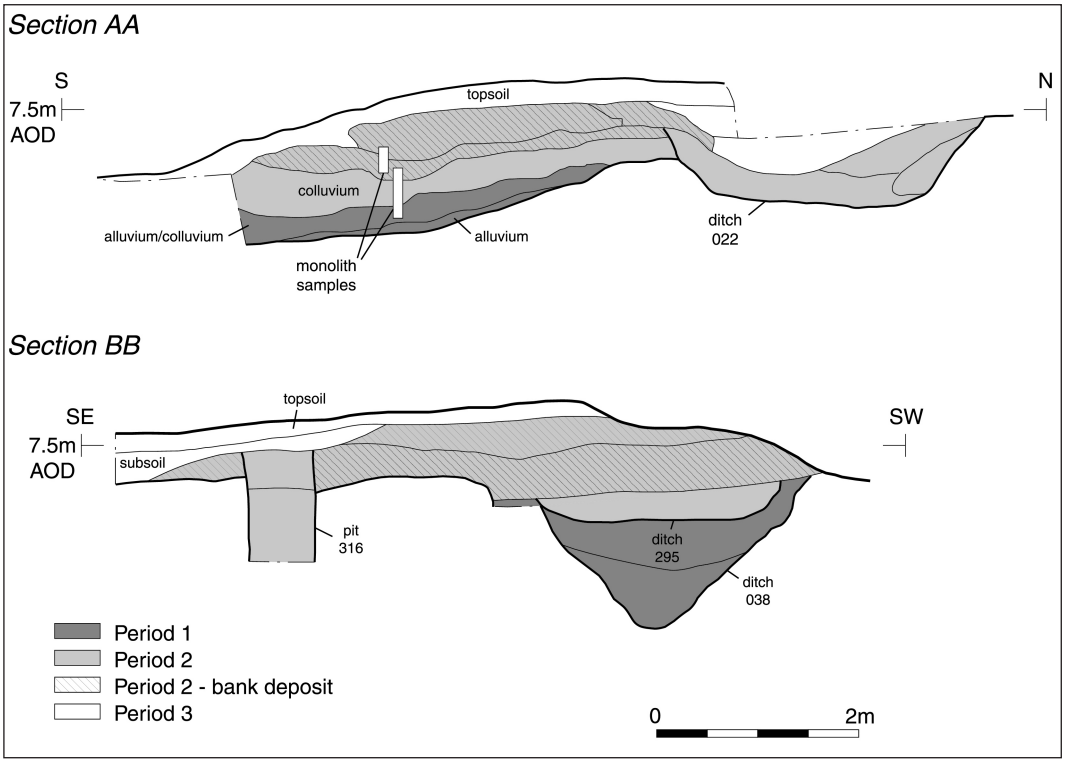

Fig. 4: Sudbrook Road, Portskewett, sections.

quantities of animal bone, including that of cattle, sheep, pig and also dog or fox were deposited into the open ditch, presumably as domestic waste from settlement close by. Other types of finds in these deposits were sparse but included a small number of sherds of pottery dated to the late second to fourth centuries AD, as well as a fragment of Late Roman tableware glass. Evidence of an internal bank was provided by a slumped deposit representing one of the later fills of the ditch. Deposits that suggest intentional infilling or dumping within the partially silted ditch were also recorded and presumably relate to a period when the ditch went out of use as a boundary of any significance. There were smaller quantities of animal bone in the later fills of ditch 038 than from the earlier silting deposits. A large rectangular sandstone block, measuring 2m in length and 0.9m in width, lay at the top of the western side of the ditch close to the internal angle with ditch 338, but it is unclear whether this was deposited here in the Roman period, or later (Fig. 6). Although not fully excavated, the stone did appear to have been worked to some degree into a relatively regular shape and it had a flat (presumed) top.

The southern length of enclosure ditch, 338, was less substantial than 038, presumably as its effectiveness as a physical boundary was somewhat augmented by the steep slope in this part of the site. It too was v-shaped, it measured up to 3.5m in width and 1.3m in depth and it terminated towards the south-western corner of the excavation area. The ditch cut through a patch of remnant subsoil and underlying alluvium and into the natural sandstone bedrock. The remnant subsoil contained pottery exclusively dated to the late third to fourth centuries AD, indicating a later Roman date for the enclosure.

Fig. 5: Section through ditch 338 and bank 037, looking north-west (scales 2m).

As with its eastern counterpart, ditch 338 contained multiple fills, the earliest indicative of episodic periods of natural silting, with backfilling and intentional dumping in the later fills. Finds from the earlier silting deposits included pottery and ceramic building material, generally dated to the second century AD or later. A fragment of a copper-alloy bracelet, of twisted form from one of the deposits in the middle of the sequence of fills is typical of a class dating to after *c*. AD 250.

L-shaped earth and rubble bank 037 was situated inside the angle of ditch 038 (Fig. 5). It survived to a total length of approximately 25m and was 5m wide and up to 0.5m thick. The bank comprised a series of dumped deposits containing a considerable amount of animal bone, including those from cattle, sheep, pig and also chicken, as well as a fragment of *tegula*, a worked bone pin (Fig. 10), and a coin of AD 330–35. A monolith sample found no evidence of a palaeosol sealed beneath the bank.

A re-cut ditch on the north-west side of the site may have defined the west side of the enclosure, although its dimensions were smaller than ditches 038 and 338. Ditch 012 extended beyond the western limit of excavation and it is unclear whether it was truncated at its south-eastern end, or terminated where it met the outcropping bedrock. The ditch profile had shallow sloping sides, and it contained a single fill which produced cattle, sheep and pig bone. Ditch 012 was re-cut by less substantial ditch 009, at least 2.15m wide and 0.45m deep with a flat base and steep sides. It contained a single fill from which 976 fragments of animal bone was recovered. Species represented

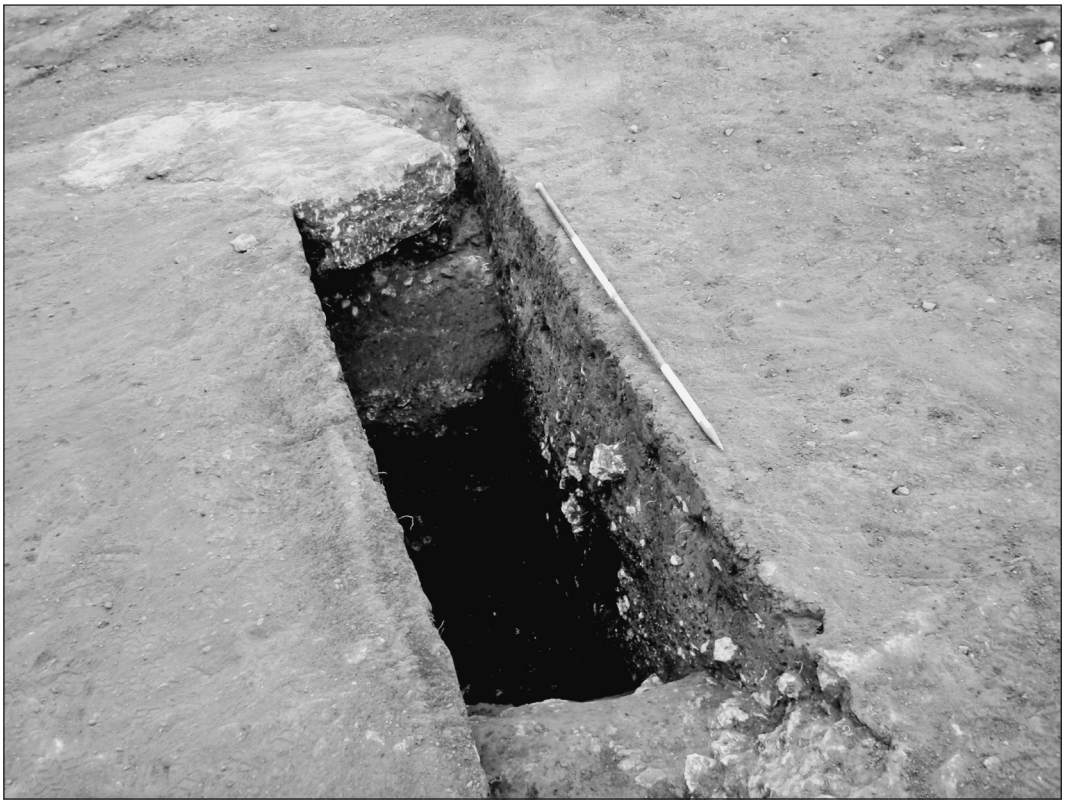

Fig. 6: Possible marker stone at south-eastern corner of Roman enclosure (scale 2m).

were similar to those within the original ditch fill, with the addition of chicken. A small amount of pottery dated to the late second to fourth centuries AD was recovered from both phases of the ditch.

In the north-western corner of the site the western terminus of ditch 007 was identified. It was 0.8m wide and survived up to 0.4m deep with a v-shaped profile, steeper on the southern side. A single later prehistoric flint flake was recovered from the fill, which was cut by later ditch 005 which was 1.2m wide and 0.35m deep with a similar v-shaped profile, from which a quantity of animal bone was recovered. The junction of Ditch 005 with Ditches 009/012 was beyond the excavation, but its alignment suggests an internal division.

Towards the south-west of the site, ditch 018 continued the alignment of enclosure ditch 338. It was 1.1m wide and up to 0.7m deep, and included a small quantity of Roman pottery, a single sherd of residual late prehistoric pottery and 729 fragments of animal bone in its fill. The animal bone included species common in other Roman features within the site (cattle, sheep and pig) but also those less well represented species, such as dog, fallow deer, goose, frog or toad and chicken. To the north of ditch 018 was a parallel, shallower ditch 016, with a small amount of Roman pottery and animal bone. Adjacent pit 317 and associated gully 323 may also be of Roman date but they only produced animal bone.

There was a large pit (113) on the upslope (northern) side of bank 037. It was oval in shape, 2.3m long, 1.5m wide and 0.85m deep, and contained four separate fills, which all appear to derive

from domestic waste, including a cess deposit at the base of the feature. Finds from these deposits included considerable amounts of animal bone, including many from birds, including chicken, goose, duck and a probable godwit, together with a small quantity of pottery, mostly dating to the third to fourth centuries AD.

Period 2: Post-Roman/medieval (sixth century AD to fourteenth century)

Overlying the alluvial and colluvial deposits within the southern part of the site was a substantial deposit of colluvial sandy silt, up to 0.5m thick. This contained abundant Roman finds, including late third to fourth-century AD pottery, a fragment of a copper-alloy brooch and two coins of AD 335–41 and AD 343–48. These artefacts are likely to have been conveyed downslope by a process of post-Roman colluviation which was confirmed by geoarchaeological analysis of monolith samples.

Period 2a: burial (seventh to eighth centuries AD)

There was an inhumation burial, 259, in the south-eastern corner of the site, immediately outside the enclosure defined by ditches 038 and 338. The burial lay within the post-Roman colluvium, however a grave cut could not be properly defined. The skeleton was largely complete and survived in a moderate state of preservation. The individual lay crouched on its right side on an approximate north-west/south-east alignment. The right arm was flexed, while the left arm was extended towards the pelvis and right femur. The legs were both flexed at the knee. The remains represent those of a juvenile aged between 12 and 15 years at death, however the unfused state of the pelvis prevented a sex estimation. A fragment of a copper-alloy object (possibly part of a brooch), may represent deliberate deposition. A fragment of the left fibia was radiocarbon dated to 662–778 cal AD at 95 per cent probability (SUERC-38912, Table 8) and provides the only stratified evidence of early medieval activity on the site.

A human tooth was found in post-Roman colluvial layer 241, to the south of ditch 022 and a fragment of human femur was recovered from medieval deposit 274, which forms part of the extant bank bounding the eastern edge of the excavation area. Neither of these remains could be part of inhumation 259.

Elsewhere, a single sherd of pottery characteristic of the earlier post-Roman period (sixth to ninth centuries) was recovered from the surface of ditch 042, in conjunction with later material and, as such, must be considered residual.

Period 2b: ditches, pits and banks and the stone structure (twelfth to fourteenth centuries)

Later medieval features included banks, ditches, pits, quarries and a stone-built kiln. The large majority of these features either contained, or were formed by, homogeneous dark sandy silt deposits.

The large ditch 027 bisected the site on a north-west/south-east alignment. It was irregular in profile, especially where it cut through the outcropping sandstone ridge, and was up to 3.1m wide and 0.85m deep. It contained two fills from which small quantities of slag and twelfth to thirteenth-century pottery were recovered, along with almost 600 fragments of animal bone. Small amounts of residual worked flint and Roman pottery, as well as eight fragments of *opus signinum* were also found.

To the north of the outcropping sandstone, ditch 027 was sealed by the remains of earth and rubble bank 014, which was approximately 20m long, 5m wide and up to 0.55m thick. Finds recovered from the bank included a considerable quantity of animal bone, as well as small quantities of Roman and medieval pottery. Although clearly residual, of particular note amongst the finds from the bank was a Roman copper-alloy toilet spoon.

At the northern end of the site ditch 027 was joined by ditch 042 at right angles. The latter was up to 1.3m wide and 0.75m deep and contained finds which included animal bone, ceramic building material and a possible medieval padlock key. Pottery recovered from the feature generally dated to the twelfth century or later, along with the residual earlier medieval sherd discussed above.

Ditch 042 was cut by parallel curving ditches 044 and 046 at the northern extent of the site. The curve of these ditches was interrupted by bank 014, but continued towards the west as ditches 020 and 040. Together with ditches 048 and 136, these features appear to have formed sequential alignments of a boundary enclosing the more elevated part of the site. The largest of these ditches was 1.1m wide and 0.35m deep and they all contained similar homogeneous dark sandy silt fills. Limited quantities of twelfth to thirteenth-century pottery were recovered from ditches 020, 040, 044 and 048, whilst ditches 040 and 046 contained single sherds of residual Roman pottery. Animal bone was found in each of the six ditches, with small quantities of slag and glass from ditches 044 and 020 respectively. A lead bell-shaped weight or net sinker was also found in ditch 044. Bank 014 overlay ditch 040 but was cut by ditch 020. Both ditches 020 and 040 were truncated and could not be traced to the western edge of the site.

Ditches 044 and 042 were cut by ditch 031, which, together with ditch 035, formed a rectilinear internal division within the main enclosure defined by the extant earthwork bank. Ditches 031 and 035 were of comparable size, each measuring up to 1.1m wide and 0.45m deep. Each contained a single fill from which quantities of twelfth to thirteenth-century pottery and animal bone were recovered.

There was a small gully, 166, 0.45m wide and 0.25m deep, between ditches 031 and 042 at the northern end of the site. Although it contained no dating evidence, it is likely to relate to the medieval activity. A similarly undated ditch 029 extended between ditches 027 and 031 in the central part of the site.

Along the eastern edge of the site, Roman ditch 038 was re-cut twice in the medieval period. The first re-cut (not illustrated) was up to 2.6m wide and 0.8m deep and was filled by material indicative of intentional backfilling, from which finds including animal bone, slag and twelfth to thirteenth-century pottery were recovered. A concentration of faunal material within the re-cut ditch in the northernmost section may indicate discrete dumps of domestic food waste. The later re-cut 295 was broad and shallow, up to 3.1m wide and 0.55m deep (Fig. 4, section BB). It contained further quantities of twelfth to thirteenth-century pottery and animal bone, as well as fragments of a copper-alloy strip and an iron clamp (or joiners dog).

The extant bank visible as an earthwork along the eastern limit of excavation sealed the medieval re-cuts of Roman ditch 038. The bank itself was investigated within a trench extending beyond the main excavation area to the east. It was almost 7m wide and constructed from two deposits, with a combined thickness of 0.8m. The latest medieval bank deposit contained frequent sandstone rubble and appears to have been revetted with this material along its inner side. Finds from both bank deposits included twelfth to thirteenth-century pottery and animal bone, as well as small quantities of glass, slag and ceramic building material.

To the south of bank 037, ditch 025 partially re-cut Roman ditch 338, however it could only be traced for a distance of 16m along the earlier feature. Ditch 025 is likely to be broadly contemporary with the medieval re-cutting of ditch 038. It was up to 0.7m wide and 0.25m deep and contained a single fill including finds of pottery of twelfth to thirteenth-century date, slag, animal bone and metal, as well as a few sherds of residual Roman pottery.

A substantial ditch, 022, extended along the southern limit of the excavation, where it cut through ditch 027 and gully 323, as well as the underlying alluvial and colluvial layers (Fig. 4,

Section AA). The ditch was up to 3.3m wide and 0.8m deep and contained several fills mostly derived from silting, but also including those indicative of slumping from upslope, possibly from an internal bank to the north. Finds from the primary fill of the ditch include pottery dated to the twelfth to thirteenth centuries, as well as a small amount of animal bone. Later fills contained similar finds, as well as small quantities of slag, ceramic building material, fired clay and a few sherds of residual Roman pottery. The adjacent earthwork bank, on the south side of ditch 022, would appear to have been formed from upcast dug out of the ditch. The bank was 6m wide and constructed from up to three deposits, together 0.65m thick. Artefacts recovered from the bank included a quantity of animal bone, as well as a few sherds of medieval, and some residual Roman pottery. The bank clearly overlay the earlier fills of ditch 022, perhaps a result of subsequent slumping of its rear face (see Fig. 4, Section AA) and was subsequently abutted by the later, post-medieval fills.

The eastern earthwork bank was cut by rectangular pit 316 which was vertically-sided and at least 1m long, 0.65m wide and 1.1m deep. It contained two fills, both of which contained quantities of twelfth to thirteenth-century pottery and animal bone. Two substantial features, also probably pits, lay to the east of ditch 038, in one of the trench excavations. Pit 155 was 2m wide, at least 0.9m deep and extended below the limit of excavation. It contained a single fill from which a small amount of animal bone was recovered. Pit 153 was 2.3m wide and 1m deep. It was steep-sided and contained a circular area of burnt material, 1.2m in diameter and 0.1m thick, at the base. This was sealed by the main fill of the pit which may represent an intentional backfill from which a single sherd of residual Roman pottery and a small quantity of animal bone were recovered.

A number of irregular quarry pits, including 284, 288 and large feature 331, were exposed within the central western part of the site and these contained twelfth to fourteenth-century pottery as well as a small quantity of residual Roman material. Pit 284 was truncated by ditch 040. The construction cut for the stone-built kiln was cut into the backfill of pit 331.

The kiln

The stone-built kiln lay on the western side of the site, the structural remains extending beyond the limit of excavation. The significance of this structure was recognised at an early stage and it was agreed with Barratt Homes that it would be preserved *in situ* and incorporated within the development. Work on this feature therefore comprised cleaning and recording only, with limited investigative excavation to its exterior with the aim of elucidating its date.

The kiln displays two phases of construction; a 'main' western part (133) and a later eastern addition (130) (Figs. 7 and 8). In total, the exposed portion of the kiln was 8m long and 4.5m wide. It survived to a maximum height of 0.65m and a maximum of six courses and was built from local Sudbrook sandstone and imported limestone, randomly coursed and bonded by sandy clay, with the sandstone apparently only used in the lowest courses. The northern and southern walls of the main kiln were up to 1.8m wide, with a rubble and clay core, whilst the remaining walls were between 0.4m and 0.8m thick.

A compacted limestone rubble floor with remnants of an overlying mortar surface (131) comprising the stoking area lay adjacent to the western walls of the kiln and from this, a flue, 0.6m wide, led to a central chamber, measuring 1.1m x 0.95m. A thin layer of spent fuel (090) partially covered the remnant mortar floor and analysis of a sample of this material indicated that the fuel wood was dominated by oak, with lesser quantities of other species such as alder or hazel, beech and ash. The charred seed remains were of oats, barley and wheat. The flue had a flagged stone floor which exhibited evidence of burning, as did its walls. The interior faces of the three walls forming the oven chamber were battered and the floor was flagged. Two pitched stones separated the flue

Fig. 7: Aerial view of the kiln (scales 2m).

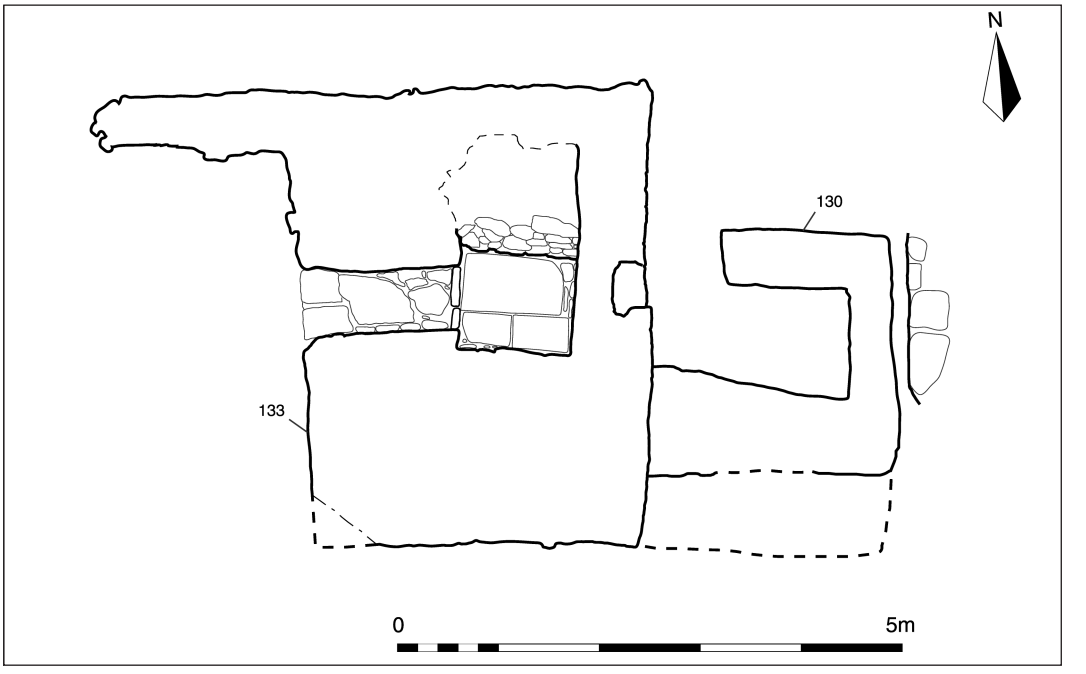

Fig. 8: The kiln (1:75).

from the oven chamber. A smaller structure (130) had subsequently been added to the rear of the main building, comprising the addition of three walls, enclosing a small trapezoidal room measuring approximately 1.95m x 0.9m–1.1m, with an entrance from the north. There was no evidence of an internal laid floor, or any surviving deposits to aid in its interpretation.

A construction cut for the kiln was dug through the backfill of quarry pit 331. A single large sherd of pottery, dating to the thirteenth century at the earliest, was found in the backfill of the construction cut for the main northern wall. The fill of the quarry pit also contained a single sherd of mid thirteenth to fourteenth-century pottery, alongside a small quantity of residual Roman material. The only other dating evidence for the kiln comprises a quantity of pottery dated to the mid thirteenth to fourteenth centuries or later, together with a broken iron knife blade, from the demolition rubble removed during cleaning of the structural remains. As such, this material is likely to indicate a broad date for when the building fell into disuse.

Period 3: Post-medieval/modern (eighteenth century to present)

The use of ditch 022, probably as a boundary or drainage feature, into the post-medieval/modern period is attested by the recovery of material dated to the eighteenth to nineteenth centuries from its latest fill. A lead disc or pan weight was also recovered from this fill.

THE FINDS

By E. R. McSloy

THE POTTERY

Prehistoric

One thick-walled bodysherd (6g) in a coarse quartz/quartzite-tempered fabric, which was the only find from ditch 018, is ascribed a broadly Late Prehistoric (Later Bronze Age or Iron Age) date.

Roman

The Roman assemblage amounts to 1281 sherds, weighing 15.90kg (21.89 EVEs; Table 1). Some 203 sherds or 15.8% was residual in medieval or later deposits.

Native-type ware

Limestone-tempered (LI). Two sherds in hand-made fabric with abundant angular limestone inclusions are representative of a pre-Roman native tradition, which probably continues into the later first century AD (Allen 1998). The sherd from midden 225 is from a jar with short, everted rim. *Date range: Late Iron Age/Early to Middle first century AD*.

Local/regional wares

South Wales greywares (SGW; LOCBS). Some variation in terms of firing and density of inclusions was noted with this category. Type LOCBS is distinguished by dark grey firing surfaces possibly in imitation of Black-Burnished ware. The range of forms, which includes narrow and wide-mouthed necked jars, jars copying Black-Burnished 1 cooking pots and tankards, and the common use of scored wavy decoration are traits shared by the South Wales greyware tradition as defined by Webster (1993, 232–55). Kilns producing a late incarnation of the tradition in fabrics notable for their variability are known from Caldicot, 3km distant (Spencer 1988). *Date range: 1st to 4th centuries AD*.

Fabric	Description	Midden 015		Other		Total		
		Ct.	EVEs	Ct.	EVEs	Ct.	EVEs	Wt.
LI	'Native type' limetone-tempered			2	.05	**2**	**.05**	**14**
CAER	Caerleon slipped wares	5	0	12	.51	**17**	**.51**	**252**
CAERm	Caerleon mortaria	5	.30			**5**	**.30**	**350**
SWGLAZ	Usk/Caerleon glazed wares	3	0	1	0	**4**	**0**	**72**
SVWO	Severn Valley ware	65	1.41	66	1.07	**131**	**2.48**	**1858**
SWG	South Wales grey	124	3.07	231	1.64	**355**	**4.71**	**4220**
LOCBS	Local? black sandy	21	.25	20	.72	**41**	**.97**	**511**
OXf	Fine, oxidised (Caerleon?)	1	0	9	.35	**10**	**.35**	**118**
GWMICA	Micaeous greywares			44	.88	**44**	**.88**	**508**
DOR BB1	Dorset Black-Burnished ware	424	7.99	186	2.68	**610**	**10.67**	**7699**
SOW WS	South west white slipped ware	1	0			**1**	**0**	**3**
WHf	Fine whitewares	1	0	1	0	**2**	**0**	**17**
CHOCCC	Brown colour-coated ware			3	.03	**3**	**.03**	**14**
NFO CC	New Forest colour-coated			1	0	**1**	**0**	**2**
OXF WH	Oxford whitewares			1	0	**1**	**0**	**6**
OXF WHm	Oxford whiteware mortaria			1	.03	**1**	**.03**	**4**
OXF RS	Oxford red-slipped ware			15	.23	**15**	**.23**	**159**
OXFRSm	Oxford red-slipped mortaria			4	.06	**4**	**.06**	**24**
ROB SH	Midlands shell-tempered ware			8	.17	**8**	**.17**	**26**
LGF SA	La Graufesenque samian			1	.08	**1**	**.08**	**10**
LEZ SA2	Lezoux samian			16	.33	**16**	**.33**	**71**
EG SA	East Gaulish samian	1	0	6	.04	**7**	**.04**	**26**
BAT AM	Baetican amphorae	1	0			**1**	**0**	**27**
Total		**652**	**13.02**	**628**	**8.87**	**1280**	**21.89**	**15991**

Table 1. Roman pottery summary.

Micaceous greywares (GWM). The division characterises sandy reduced wares with high white mica and occurring in a dish/bowl and jar forms derived from the later Black-Burnished 1 series. The type was absent from second-century deposit 299 (midden 015), and was commonest among later Roman material re-deposited in alluvial deposits (layers 239–41). Similar material was noted from third or fourth-century phases at Thornwell Farm, Chepstow (Evans 1996, 52). An origin in the Gloucestershire Severn Vale is probable. *Date range: third to fourth centuries AD*.

Severn Valley ware (SVWO). Fabric corresponds to the typical fine, pale-orange firing type (Tomber and Dore 1998, 148). Forms match those described by Webster (1976); mainly wide-mouthed jars and tankards. *Date range: first to fourth centuries AD*.

Caerleon wares (CAER; CAERm). Types equate to finewares and mortaria types described by Webster (1993). Identifiable fineware forms include a rough-casted beaker and a dishes/bowls copying samian forms 31, 36 and 37. An unstratified mortarium matching form *caer18* from Usk (Hartley 1993, 414) bears a stamp beginning 'DB' and is probably an example of the DBNV, stamps known from Caerleon (Seager-Smith 2000, 277–8). *Date range: second century AD*.

Other oxidised (*OXID, OXf, WH)*. The oxidised material probably encompass variants within the dominant local reduced-ware tradition, and an unslipped fineware perhaps associated with production at Caerleon (Compton and Webster 2000, 200–1). The few vessel forms identifiable include indented beakers, and more unusually a cheesepress (Fig. 9, no. 2). *Date range: first to fourth centuries AD*.
Caerleon/Usk glazed ware (SWGLAZ). Production after *c*. AD 74, but probably no later than the early second century, is known from Caerleon (Arthur 1978, 324–34). The spouted strainer from midden 015 (Fig. 9, no. 1) can be paralleled by a find from Brecon (ibid., fig. 8.10.2). *Date range: late 1st to early second centuries AD*.
Other slipped/colour-coated (CHOCC; SOW WS). Brown colour-coated fabric CHOCC compares to types known from north Gloucestershire, its forms derived from the Late Oxford series (Cirencester type 105: Keely 1986, 160–1). A north Wiltshire source is probable for type SOW WS (Tomber and Dore 1998, 192). *Date ranges: CHOCC: C4; SOW WS: Date range: late second to early third centuries AD*.

Traded wares
DOR BB1; OXF WH; OXF RS; NFO CC; ROB SH. A significant proportion of the assemblage comprises traded types of British origin for which the codings of the National Fabric Reference Collection are utilised (Tomber and Dore 1998). Most abundant are Dorset Black-Burnished wares which occur as utilitarian jar and open form classes. In addition there is pedestalled base sherd from ditch 338 probably from a bowl. The majority of the remainder is specialist or finewares. Products of the Oxfordshire kilns (Young 1977) occur in a narrow range of forms; mortaria (Young classes M17; C100) and bowls imitating samian form 38 (Young C51). New Forest colour-coated ware occurs as a single sherd from a beaker. Midlands type shell-tempered coarsewares, possibly manufactured at Harrold, Bedfordshire (Brown 1993) are widely distributed by the fourth century and are characteristic of groups from south-east Wales post *c*. AD 350 (Webster 1993, 294). *Date ranges: DOR BB1: first to fourth centuries AD; OXF WH: late second to fourth centuries AD; OXF RS: late third to fourth centuries AD; NFO CC: late third to fourth centuries; ROB SH: mid to late fourth century AD*.

Samian
LGF SA; LEZ SA; EG SA. The small samian group includes examples from each of the manufacturing areas, with Central Gaulish types (LEZ SA2) most common, suggesting a focus in the second century AD. The single South Gaulish (LGF SA) sherd from ditch 136 is a cup (Drag. 27) that probably dates to the later first century AD. Forms among the Central and East Gaulish vessels are plain types (Drag. 33 cups and Drag. 36, 31 and 31r dishes/bowls) and mainly supporting dating after *c*. AD 150. *Date ranges: LGF SA: mid 1st to early 2nd centuries AD; LEZ SA: 2nd century AD; EG SA: mid second to mid third centuries AD*.

Chronological summary
Earlier Roman (second century AD)
Of the two midden deposits from which exclusively early Roman pottery was recovered, midden 015 was exceptional in producing a large and well-dated group. The pottery from this deposit was well preserved, reflected in a mean sherd weight of 15g, considerably greater than of 10g for the remainder of the assemblage, and suggestive of a discrete dump. Severn Valley wares include tankard forms current from the second century and continuing into the earlier third (Webster 1976, nos 38–9). A number of factors however indicate dating confined to the second century and probably

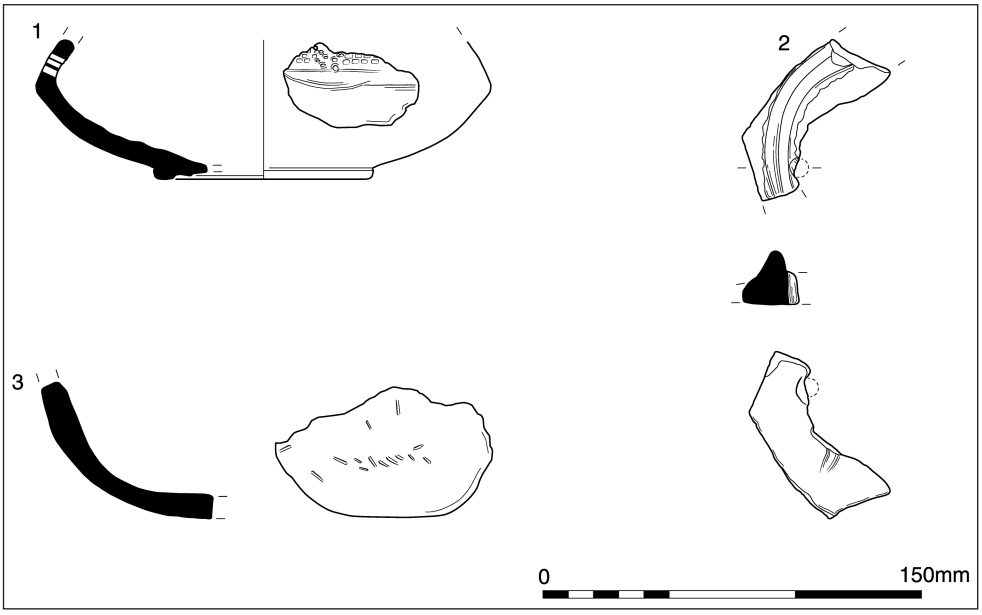

Fig. 9: Sudbrook Road, Portskewett, pottery.

the earlier Antonine period (*c*. AD 140–70). Samian is limited to a single East Gaulish sherd, dating after *c*. AD 140. A Caerleon-type mortarium with high bead and wide flange is closest to vessels of form *caer16* dated *c*. AD 130–80 (Hartley 1993, 414). The spouted strainer, (Fig. 9, no. 1), should date no later than *c*. AD 130 and may be a survival in use. Black-Burnished wares comprise the largest element (65 per cent by count). All conform to forms current in the mid/later second century: jars are of Seager-Smith's Type 1 (1993), with acute-angled lattice and the majority with burnished wavy decoration to the neck; dishes and bowls are mainly flat-rimmed forms with lattice decoration (Types 22 and 23), with fewer (1.14 EVEs) plain/grooved-rim vessels (Type 20). South Wales greywares include small jars/beakers with knobbed barbotine decoration (cf. Webster 1993, 14.3) and a bowl reminiscent of the 'London ware' tradition, in imitation of samian form 37, and with a compass-scribed 'ovolo'.

Later Roman (third to fourth centuries AD)
A number of Period 1 features produced material of later Roman type (principally the upper deposit of bank 015, bank 037 and pit 113). Quantities are small and the condition is frequently poor. Further material occurs from the alluvial and colluvial deposits in the southern part of the site (147 sherds) or is re-deposited in Period 2 deposits. Micaceous greywares are relatively common, however key to dating are traded fine and specialist wares, among which Oxford white or red-slipped wares are most common. Roman shell-tempered wares, typically dated after *c*. AD 350 in Wales, were recovered from two deposits; Period 1 bank 037 and the fill of Period 2 pit 262.

Pottery discussion
In its overall range the assemblage shares characteristics with groups in the region including Thornwell Farm, Chepstow (Evans 1996), Usk (Webster 1993) and Caerleon (Compton and

Form generic	Midden 015		Other		Total		
	Vessels	EVEs	Vessels	EVEs	Vessels	EVEs	%EVEs
cup	0		4	.10	**4**	**.10**	**<1**
beaker	1	0	2	.10	**3**	**.10**	**<1**
tankard	9	1.19	6	.20	**15**	**1.39**	**6.3**
jar	47	7.86	64	5.10	**111**	**12.96**	**59.2**
bowl	3	.59	21	.97	**24**	**1.56**	**7.1**
dish	21	3.08	27	192	**48**	**5.00**	**22.8**
cheesepress	0		1	0	**1**		**–**
strainer bowl	1	0	0	0	**1**		**–**
mortarium	1	.30	6	.48	**7**	**.78**	**3.6**
Total	**83**	**13.02**	**131**	**8.87**	**214**	**21.89**	

Table 2. Roman pottery forms summary.

Webster 2000). Native-type wares are notably scarce, suggesting that any possible focus of Late Iron Age activity lies away from the excavated area. The assemblage shares characteristics in its overall range with the group from the nearby site at Church Farm, Caldicot (Insole 2000), though direct comparisons are not possible due to the absence of available quantified data from this site. The level of Black-Burnished ware (47.7 per cent by count) in the Portskewett assemblage is twice that at Thornwell Farm. The higher incidence of Black-Burnished ware at Portskewett probably reflects its primarily second-century dating; a period when supply of this type is at its peak (Evans 1996, 46).

The assemblage overall, for in particular the midden 015 group, is utilitarian in character; reflecting use primarily cooking/storage and with few serving or 'display'-related vessels (Table 2). More unusual occurrences are a cheesepress (Fig. 9, no. 2) and a spouted strainer (Fig. 9, no. 1), the latter a form probably used in the production of infused, possibly medicinal drinks. Lower status is also reflected in the small samian assemblage (1.8% by count), which is made up of plain forms only.

Early medieval (sixth to ninth centuries)

One sherd (80g) from the surface cleaning of Period 2 ditch 042 is attributable to this period although it occurred residually alongside later medieval wares. The fabric contains abundant, well-chopped organic inclusions and common quartz and compares with material from the western parts of Britain, including Gloucestershire (Vince 1984). The vessel form (Fig. 9, no. 3) is most likely a globular-bodied jar, with a poorly defined base. In isolation, dating is difficult although a seventh/eighth-century date matching that of the inhumation burial is plausible.

Later medieval

The later medieval assemblage is small, amounting to 290 sherds, weighing 3.035g (1.75 EVEs). It was derived from 57 separate deposits, mainly bank deposits (148 sherds/51per cent) and the fills of ditches or pits (134 sherds/46 per cent). Average sherd weight is low for a medieval group at 10.5g.

Source	Fabric	Description	Chepstow type*	Ct.	Wt.	EVEs
Local	QZox	Local coarse sandy, red firing	Ha.1	69	625	.42
	QZs	Local coarse sandy (most reduced)	Ha.1?	122	1079	.45
	QZli	Local coarse sandy with limestone	Ha. 1?	24	283	.25
	QZc	Local/Forest Dean coarse sandy	Ha.3	12	142	.09
	JUGox	Fine jug fabric with sparse sandstone	Ha.2	12	176	.29
	CM	coarse, mixed inclusions	–	16	185	–
	FS	fine sandy	–	5	43	.08
	MS	Quartz with mudstone	–	1	14	.05
	QZf	fine sandy (oxidised)	–	1	36	–
	QZm	Fine sandy with mica	–	1	3	–
	QT	quartzite inclusions		2	14	–
Bristol	BRISg	Bristol glazed	Jb	15	275	.10
	HGR	Ham Green redwares	Ka	6	89	–
	CARLI	Bristol carboniferous limestone	Kc	2	39	.09
Cotswolds	COTS	Cotswolds oolitic	Lc	1	42	.09
	MINE	Minety (north Wiltshire) ware	La	1	4	–
Total				**290**	**3049**	**1.91**

* See Vince 1991.

Table 3. Medieval pottery summary.

Composition

The larger part of the assemblage comprises unglazed coarsewares. Defined types (Table 3) reflect variations in inclusion density/coarseness, or the presence of limestone or other coarse inclusions. Coarse sandy fabrics, some with polycrystalline (sandstone) inclusions, account for the bulk of this material. Such types are representative of the locally dominant traditions deriving from multiple sources across Glamorgan and the Forest of Dean and documented by Vince from Chepstow (Fabric Ha.1: Vince 1991, 95–7). Vessel forms are jars/cooking pots with everted rims, which may be simple or 'developed' (ibid. 95). A small proportion among the unglazed coarsewares comprise non-local types from the Cotswolds region to the east (types COTS, MINE) and the area of Bristol (types BRISg, HGR, CARLI).

Glazed wares are poorly represented in the assemblage (9.7 per cent). Vessels in red-firing fabrics from ditches 022, 031, 049 and the backfill of the construction cut for the stone-built kiln compare with Vince's (local) type Ha.2 (Vince 1991, 97–9). Most are bodysherds, although a rim sherd with simple pulled spout was recovered from pit 066. Sherds in a wheelthrown light-bodied glazed fabric from the rubble and topsoil deposits overlying the kiln and from the latest fill of quarry pit 331 are of Bristol Redcliffe type.

Dating

Dating for the later medieval activity is greatly hindered by the general absence of internal phasing or of larger, sealed groups. Carboniferous limestone Type CARLI is representative of the earliest

high medieval activity, occurring as isolated sherds from ditches 042 and 050. A rimsherd in this type from ditch 042 is a jar with upright rim, with a rolled over lip. Dating in the late eleventh or twelfth century was suggested for equivalent material (fabric Kc) from Chepstow (Vince 1991, 112). Similar dating is possible for Cotswolds oolitic limestone-tempered type COTS, based on occurrences of the type in south-east Wales (Clark 1991, 32). This type occurs as a jar with clubbed rim from the eastern bank.

Dating for local types (Table 3) is reliant on local comparisons and mainly on Vince's (1991) work on the large Chepstow group. On this basis the chronological focus for the later medieval activity, including for the largest context groups of 18–81 sherds from the eastern bank deposits and ditch 100, is in the later twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Some sparse later activity is also indicated, associated with quarry pit 331 and rubble deposits overlying the kiln. Significantly the local sandy types are absent from these deposits and dating is provided by Bristol glazed wares produced from the mid thirteenth and throughout the fourteenth century (Ponsford 1993). Forms represented are jugs, one of which, with applied thumbed pads below a squared rim, is most characteristic of the period after *c*. 1300.

Illustrated pottery (Fig. 9)

1 Caerleon/Usk type glazed ware. Spouted strainer. (Cf. Arthur 1978, fig. 8.10.2) and roller-stamped 'bipartite' vessels (ibid., fig. 8.10.8). Period 1; midden 015.
2 Fabric OXf; cheesepress fragment. Period 1; ditch 338.
3 Fabric ORGq; Base from globular vessel. Period 1; ditch 042.

CERAMIC BUILDING MATERIAL

A total of 55 fragments of ceramic building material (2287g) was recovered. The majority (32 fragments weighing 1650g) was derived from Roman features. Of the remainder, from Period 2 (medieval) or unphased deposits, most or all comprises re-deposited Roman material.

Identifiable forms are mainly the common Roman roofing classes; flanged *tegulae* (10 fragments) and curving *imbrex* (9 fragments), together with one brick, identifiable by its greater thickness (40mm). No cut-outs, signatures or pre-firing markings of any kind were present. The larger part of the group comprises unfeatured pieces, the majority probably representing *tegulae* fragments. Most material occurs in a similar orange-firing fabric characterised by abundant quartz sand inclusions and rare clay pellets and iron oxides.

METALWORK AND WORKED BONE

A total of 25 metal items and two of worked bone were recorded. The majority comprised nails or fragmentary items of iron, for which details are included in the archive. Only items of intrinsic interest are described for publication. The toilet spoon/ear scoop (catalogue no. 4) was subject to XRF (X-ray fluorescence) analysis, and a full report of the results is held in the archive.

Copper alloy

1. Socketed axe fragment comprising a portion of the curving cutting edge and one side which is ridged. The socket slot extents to within 12mm of the edge. The surviving proportions suggest a narrowly tapering form, however the axe is not otherwise classifiable. Socketed axes represent the final development of axes in bronze and belong to the Late Bronze Age, *c*. 1000 to 700 BC. Surviving length: 27mm; width: 23mm. Period 2 Colluvium 245. Not illustrated.

2. Brooch fragment comprising the lower part of the bow and foot with catchplate. The bow is narrow with a knurled ridge. The solid catchplate and double moulding at the foot are features most commonly seen with trumpet form and some T-shaped brooches. A date in the late first or second centuries is probable. Surviving length 18mm. Period 2 Colluvium 245. Not illustrated.
3. Small fragment of (2 strand) cable form bracelet. Late third to fourth centuries (Crummy 1984, 37). Surviving length 15mm. Period 1 Ditch fill 079 (fill of 338). Not illustrated.
4. Toilet spoon/ear scoop. From rolled sheet metal or thin bar. The scoop is a long oval in form, and flat; the shaft twisted. The latter can be a feature of examples published as Roman, although for which a post-Roman (Anglo-Saxon or medieval) date is also possible (Eckardt and Crummy 2008, 46). XRF analysis indicates the metal composition is of a lightly leaded bronze of the kind common across many periods. The composition most closely matches alloys used for Roman toilet implements, as opposed to later examples (Dungworth in archive). Length 52mm; width at bowl 5mm. Period 2 bank deposit 014. Not illustrated.

Iron

5. Whittle tang knife. The tang (mostly absent) is set below the blade back. The back is straight, the cutting edge rising to the tip. The blade form is similar to earlier fourteenth-century knives from London (Cowgill *et al*. 1987, 82–84). Length 125mm; Width (max): 20mm. Period 2 Rubble layer 073. Not illustrated.
6. Padlock key fragment. The bit and most of the stem are missing. The remaining part of the stem is strip-like, widening close to the terminal. The terminal is looped up and rolled back. Surviving length 66mm. Period 2 ditch fill 043 (fill of ditch 042). Not illustrated.

Worked bone

7. Pin with scoop-like head and double moulding at junction with shaft. The head is reminiscent of toilet spoons/ear scoops though such items seldom if ever occur in bone (Eckardt and Crummy

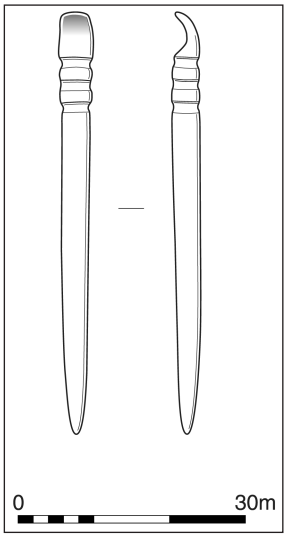

Fig. 10: Sudbrook Road, Portskewett, worked bone ‘scoop’.

2008). The nearest parallels are the 'pin-like objects with head in the form of a scoop', from Whitton, South Glamorgan (Webster 1981, 21–12, nos. 7–9). These similarly feature the mouldings below the head, though are further embellished beneath the scoop. A regional pin-cum-toilet spoon sub-group is a possibility, with a later Roman date probable. Length 55mm. Diam. 3mm. Period 1 bank deposit 110 (bank 037). (Fig. 10).

8. Spindlewhorl from the femoral head of an adult cattle. The femoral head was only part fused at the time of death (suggesting an age at death of 3 years), and the object is broken along this point of weakness. Similar objects are known from the Iron Age and later periods though MacGregor (1985, 187) indicates that they are particularly well-known from the Late Anglo-Saxon and Norman periods. Diam. (ext.) 43mm Diam. (int.) 9mm. Thickness 22mm. Period 2 bank deposit 275. Not illustrated.

COINS

A total of eight Roman coins were recovered, five coming from the evaluation and recovered during the metal-detector scan undertaken by GGAT.

AE3 copy?. Constantinopolis; AD 330–5. *Rev.* Victory on prow with sceptre and shield. Further details are unclear. Period 1 bank 037.
AE3. House of Constantine; AD 343–8. *Rev*. Victories facing; VICTORIA AUG GG. Mint mark illegible. Period 2 colluvium 241.
AE4 copy. House of Constantine; AD 335–41. *Rev.* soldiers with one standard; GLORIA EXERCITUS. Period 2 colluvium 241.

The following coins from the evaluation were identified by Rodney Hudson:
AE 19mm dia. Illegible. Late third to mid fourth century. Evaluation. Trench 9; deposit 075.
AE radiate of Carausius AD 287–93. *Obv.*/IMP C CARAUSIUS PF AUG. *Rev*. uncertain ('S. C.' either side of figure standing left). Evaluation Trench 8; deposit 074.
AE 18mm dia. Illegible. Late 3rd to mid 4th century. Evaluation Trench 8; deposit 074.
AE near Illegible. Constantinian issue period AD 330–35. *Rev*. two soldiers and two standards (GLORIA EXERCITVS). Evaluation Trench 8; deposit 074.
AE reduced Follis of Constantine (as Caesar); Trier mint AD 321. *Obv.*/CONSTANTIVS IVN NC radiate bust left; *Rev*. BEATA TRANQVILLITAS inscribed altar [VOT/IS/XX]. RIC 315. Evaluation Trench 2; deposit 067.

ROMAN GLASS

Unfeatured fragment from free-blown vessel (<1mm thick). Pale green glass. Weight 1g. Period 1 ditch 038. Not illustrated.
Natural green. Prismatic bottle? 4mm thick, unfeatured. Weight 3g. Period 3 layer (topsoil). Not illustrated.
One of the two of the Roman fragments is stratified. This is a small body fragment, pale green in colour and with frequent air bubbles. As such it is typical of blown tableware vessels of the Late Roman period. The second fragment, from the topsoil overlying the medieval stone structure, is typical of natural green glass bottles of square or polygonal form and common from the first to third centuries AD.

BIOLOGICAL REMAINS

HUMAN BONE ANALYSIS

By Rachel Ives

A single inhumation burial 259 was analysed from grave cut 260, and two disarticulated human bone fragments from contexts 241 and 274. A fragment of the left fibia from burial 259 was radiocarbon dated to 662–778 cal AD at 95 per cent probability (SUERC-38912). An osteological analysis of the human remains was undertaken following Brickley and McKinley (2004) and English Heritage (1991, 2002).

Burial 259

The individual was largely complete (95 per cent), and bone surface preservation was good. The lack of epiphyseal bone fusion, together with the stage of dental eruption of the second premolar and second permanent molar indicated the individual was an adolescent aged between 12 and 15 years at death. Diaphyseal long bone lengths suggested a slightly younger age of between 10 and 11 years but skeletal growth can be limited by periods of illness or poor nutrition (Eveleth and Tanner 1990) leading to minor ageing discrepancies between different methods of estimation (Scheuer and Black 2000). Linear dental enamel hypoplastic defects suggested a period of stress or illness that temporarily stopped the formation of dental enamel during growth. The enamel defects occurred before the completion of the tooth crowns by approximately four years of age, suggesting a mild episode of illness had occurred during early childhood. As the pelvis had not fully developed at the time of death, no attempt was made to estimate of the individual sex of the remains.

Rugged bone development was observed at several musculo-skeletal attachment sites (enthesophyte development). Muscles broadly used during repeated or strenuous arm lifting and lowering were particularly pronounced in the left arm. Interestingly, this arm was not as robust in the right arm but there was no evidence for disuse or atrophy. The asymmetry most likely indicates an activity was practiced where the mechanical loading was spread differentially between the arms. Agriculture and animal husbandry, as well as working in local industries such as metalworking, housing and boat construction, are likely to have contributed to a physically active lifestyle in this period (see Roberts and Cox 2003). Deposits of remodelling, woven, sub-periosteal new bone formation were observed on the medial femora and tibiae of the legs. Similar manifestations can result from a localised trauma but a non-specific infection is the most likely and a frequently occurring cause of these lesions (Roberts and Manchester 2005).

The left and right eye orbits displayed mild scattered foramina (cribra orbitalia). Recent hypotheses have suggested a deficiency of animal protein and vitamin B12 or effects of parasitic infections and gastro-intestinal illnesses may have contributed to the formation of these lesions (Ortner 2003; Walker *et al*. 2009). These lesions occurred less in the early medieval period compared to the preceding Roman period as reviewed by Roberts and Cox (2003, 185) but differences in overall numbers of burials may complicate the comparison of prevalence rates.

There was evidence for a slight under-development of the apophyseal facets of the lumbar vertebrae on the left side although the changes would not have had any consequences for vertebral alignment. Six of the permanent teeth showed a variation of normal morphology whereby the tooth crowns were rotated relevant to their normal positions in the sockets. This change is a slight anomaly rather than a pathological change.

Mineralised plaque deposits (calculus) affected 48% of the teeth (13/27) indicating the consumption of some carbohydrates from cereals such as bread wheat, rye and barley, as well as poor cleaning of the teeth (Hillson 1996; Roberts and Cox 2003, 184). There was no evidence for periodontal disease.

Disarticulated Human Bone

Two items of disarticulated human bone were also examined. Context (241) contained an adult human tooth (maxillary left first molar). This duplicated the maxillary left first molar of burial (259) and was of larger proportions. Context (274) contained a fragment of distal femur shaft of adult proportions and with a rugged and well pronounced musculoskeletal attachment (enthesophyte). This fragment was also duplicated in, and of very different dimensions to, burial (259).

ANIMAL BONE

By Jonny Geber and Sylvia Warman

About 38kg of animal bones were recovered from Roman and medieval deposits. The material was in general moderately well preserved, although several bones displayed cortical erosion and considerable fragmentation. The bones were identified to species, skeletal element and side, with the aid of the osteological reference collection held at Cotswold Archaeology and reference literature (Cohen and Serjeantson 1996; Schmid 1972). Age-at-death was estimated from the degree of epiphyseal fusion (Silver 1970) and mandibular molar wear (Payne 1973). Shoulder heights in cattle, pig and dog were calculated using Fock (1966), Teichert (1969) and Harcourt (1974). The bones were quantified by fragment count (NISP), minimum number of individuals (MNI) and weight (Chaplin 1971).

Roman

Animal bones collected by hand from 36 Roman deposits amounted to 2,645 fragments (19kg), of which 41 per cent (76 per cent of the weight) could be identified to species. The material comprised mainly remains from the meat-producing domesticates: cattle, sheep/goat and pig. Lesser quantities of skeletal remains from horse, dog, goose and fowl were also identified, as well as wild species represented by hare and godwit (Table 4).

Bones from cattle dominated the assemblage. These derived from both meat-rich and meat-poor elements (Table 5). When assessed in quantity by relative distribution based on minimum number of animal units (MAU) (see O'Connor 2003, 150–6), the material appears to contain a relatively low proportion of horncores, vertebrae and phalanges. Vertebrae are however difficult to quantity when fragmented, and this disproportion may therefore simply reflect a taphonomical bias. The relative low quantity of horncores and phalanges, on the other hand, may indicate that slaughter waste had been cut off and deposited prior to moving the carcass for butchery and dressing elsewhere. The epiphyseal bone data from the cattle remains ($N = 52$) indicated that the main period of slaughter occurred when the animals were between 3–4 years. Although based on a small quantity of data, this would suggest an economy where the primary focus lay on beef production rather than milk. No cows could be certainly identified from the assemblage either, and the only bones that could be sexed were a metacarpal from a bull and a metatarsal from a bull or oxen (method by Howard 1963). These gave estimated shoulder heights of 115cm and 104cm respectively.

Species	NISP	MNI	Weight (g)
Cattle *(Bos taurus)*	544	7	10,914.93
Caprovine *(Ovis aries/Capra hircus)*	362	17	2,179.30
Pig *(Sus sp.)*	126	5	1,051.19
Horse *(Equus caballus)*	3	1	43.76
Dog *(Canis familiaris)*	11	4	155.32
Hare *(Lepus timidus)*	1	1	1.79
Goose *(Anser anser)*	13	2	37.83
Fowl *(Gallus gallus)*	20	3	33.36
Duck *(Anas platyrhynchos)*	1	1	0.96
Godwit *(Limosa sp.)*	2	1	1.42

Table 4. Identified animal species from Roman deposits.
Abbreviations: NISP = number of identified specimens (fragment count); MNI = minimum number of individuals.

The caprovine bone assemblage comprised 362 fragments, but represented by the minimum number of individuals, these were the most abundant species in the assemblage, with 17 animals present. Of these, a minimum of five were sexed as female and three as male. No bones were identified as goat *(Capra hircus)*, and it seems most likely that all derive from sheep *(Ovis aries)*. The age assessment of 23 epiphyseal bones indicated that the majority of the livestock were slaughtered after the first year, and that no animals were kept beyond four years. The mandibular dental wear, which could be assessed from 27 specimens, however, indicated that the majority of animals were slaughtered between 1–3 years, with approximately one quarter of the stock spared for later slaughter between 3–6 years. This would suggest an economy with a focus on meat production, where milk and wool were secondary products. The anatomical distribution of the caprovine remains was uneven, and it exhibited a particular dominance of skull bones, pelvic and hindlimb elements. No horncores or phalanges were identified in the material, and only a small proportion of metapodials were present. This may reflect that skinned fleeces, with the horncores and feet attached, were utilised elsewhere.

The pig bone material was dominated by skull bones, forelimb elements and metapodials. Very few pig vertebrae were present, and there was also a noticeable underrepresentation of pelvic and hindlimb elements. This may suggest that particular pork meat cuts, such as the loin, chump, fillet of leg and leg shank ends, were sold off and consumed elsewhere. Shoulder height could be estimated from one calcaneus, which gave an estimation of 72cm. The epiphyseal bone data suggests that most pigs were slaughtered after the first year, and that no animals were kept beyond 2½ years.

The horse remains comprised only three fragments of teeth found in two deposits: a maxillary molar, and a mandibular incisor and molar from an adult animal. The dog bone assemblage comprised 11 fragments from a minimum of four individuals. Seven fragments derived from a minimum of one large-sized dog. One of these bones, which was a humerus with the proximal end unfused, belonged to an animal aged between 8–15 months at the time of death. The remaining four bones were from small-sized dogs, and comprised three left humeri and a right radius. All bones suggests that these were three dogs of the same size class (Baxter 2010; Type 2b), and the estimated shoulder height of 34cm which would be calculated from one of the humeri indicates that these were terrier-sized dogs.

Element	BOS	S/G	SUS	EQU	CAN	LEP	LM	MM	IND
Horn core	10	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Cranial	52	38	24	–	1	–	36	9	–
Mandible	50	64	16	–	1	–	6	–	–
Loose teeth	87	51	26	3	–	–	–	–	–
Hyoid	1	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Atlas	3	1	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Axis	2	1	–	–	1	–	–	–	–
Cerv.vert.	13	–	–	–	2	–	–	–	–
Thor.vert.	21	6	1	–	–	–	2	–	–
Lumb.vert.	10	5	1	–	–	–	3	–	–
Sacrum	–	–	1	–	–	–	–	–	–
Rib	156	104	12	–	1	–	20	30	–
Scapula	21	9	5	–	–	–	6	2	–
Humerus	7	7	6	–	4	–	1	–	–
Radius	14	13	3	–	1	1	–	–	–
Ulna	9	2	7	–	–	–	1	1	–
Carpal	1	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Metacarpal	7	2	5	–	–	–	–	–	–
Coxae	14	17	1	–	–	–	5	2	–
Femur	12	9	3	–	–	–	–	–	–
Tibia	15	31	1	–	–	–	–	–	–
Fibula	–	–	5	–	–	–	–	–	–
Astragalus	1	1	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Calcaneus	8	–	3	–	–	–	–	–	–
Tarsal	1	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Metatarsal	16	1	3	–	–	–	–	–	–
Metapodial	–	–	3	–	–	–	–	–	–
Phalanx 1	7	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Phalanx 2	2	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Phalanx 1/2	2	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Phalanx 3	2	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Indet.	–	–	–	–	–	–	600	624	186
Total:	**544**	**362**	**126**	**3**	**11**	**1**	**680**	**668**	**186**

Table 5. Identified mammal taxa and skeletal elements from Roman deposits.
Abbreviations: BOS = cattle; S/G = caprovine; SUS = pig; EQU = horse; CAN = dog; LEP = hare; LM = large sized mammal; MM = medium sized mammal; IND = indeterminable.

One single bone, the shaft of a right radius, was identified as hare. The hare is a native species to Britain, but may not have been consumed to a great degree by the Britons prior to the Roman arrival (Matheson 1941). The identified bone did not display any cut marks. Although not in abundance, butchered hare bones are however occasionally found on Roman sites in Britain which indicate that hare flesh would have been consumed during the period, and have, for example, been noted at Caerwent (Smith 2001) and Exeter (Maltby 1979).

A total of 64 bird bones were also present in the deposits, of which 36 fragments could be identified to species. These remains comprised mainly bones of goose and fowl, and it is clear that these birds contributed to the diet. A single coracoid bone of a mallard was also present, and domestic ducks may also have been reared. Two bones, a coracoid and humerus most likely from the same bird, were identified as a godwit. This is probably a black-tailed godwit *(Limosa limosa)* which is a wading bird with a preferred breeding habitat of wet meadows, marshes and moorlands (Mullarney *et al*. 1999). This find therefore reflects the local natural fauna of the Severn estuary.

Medieval

A substantial assemblage of 2,250 bones (19kg) was recovered from medieval deposits, with 362 of these identifiable to species which included cattle, caprovine, pig, horse, dog and fowl. Most of the animal bone was recovered from ditch fills, and a few from pits, postholes and layers. Several medieval deposits contained residual Roman pottery. Thus the assemblage is likely to comprise a mixture of animal bone from both the Roman and medieval periods, and the material does therefore not allow for any further discussion.

SHELL

By Sarah Cobain

Hand-collected material was retrieved from Period 2 contexts including ditch 031, the eastern bank deposits, the backfill of the construction cut for the stone kiln and the Period 3 topsoil sealing the structure and associated rubble deposits. The material totaled eight fragments of oyster shell (*Ostrea edulis*) weighing 133g. The oyster shell appears to represent discarded food waste. It is a species that was commonly harvested and consumed throughout history.

PLANT MACROFOSSILS AND CHARCOAL

By Sarah Cobain

Eleven bulk soil samples taken from a series of Roman and medieval features, including pits, ditches, and a bank deposit, were processed and assessed for plant macrofossil and charcoal remains. All the plant macrofossils were charred. Following assessment, three samples were deemed suitable for plant macrofossil analysis, and six for charcoal analysis, to provide additional information regarding the function of features sampled, socio-economic activities and to infer the composition of the local woodlands and flora.

Methodology

Plant macrofossil and charcoal remains were retrieved by standard flotation procedures using a 250micron sieve to collect the flot and 1mm mesh to retain the residue. The seeds were identified using a low power stereo-microscope (Brunel MX1) (x10–x40). Identifications were carried out with reference to images and descriptions by Cappers *et al*. (2006), Berggren (1981) and Anderberg (1994). Nomenclature follows Stace (1997).

Up to 100 charcoal fragments (>2mm) were fractured by hand to reveal the wood anatomy on radial, tangential and transverse planes and identified using an epi-illuminating microscope (Brunel SP400) (x40–x400). Identifications were carried out with reference to images and descriptions by

Cutler and Gale (2000), Schoch *et al*. (2004) and Wheeler *et al*. (1989). Nomenclature of species follows Stace (1997).

Results

The samples analysed were moderate to well preserved, with 29 plant species and seven tree/shrub species identified (Tables 6 and 7).

Period 1: Roman

The cereals recovered from ditch 009 contained a small number of possible spelt grains, oat, barley and bread wheat. These were commonly cultivated across Britain during the Roman period (Cool 2006, 69) and have been found in other nearby sites such as Church Farm, Caldicot (Insole 2000, 29). Barley would have been used to produce bread, porridge, pottages, for animal fodder and to produce beer. Oats were dominantly used as fodder but were known to be used to make porridge, unleavened bread or oat cakes. Spelt wheat was used to bake bread (Cool 2006, 70–1). Hazelnut shells were also identified. Hazelnuts would have been roasted and eaten or placed in long-term storage (Cool 2006, 126).

Species found in arable environments were present, such as wild radish and cleavers and opportunistic species found in disturbed habitats (field margins, roadsides, adjacent to settlement) such as medick/clover and fat hen/goosefoot. Sedge, which is indicative of a marsh environment (waterlogged field/stream) was also recorded.

The charcoal found in ditches 009, 012 and 338 and bank 037 is presumed to derive from fuel. The charcoal consisted of oak, alder/hazel, birch, hazel, hawthorn/rowan/crab apple, and cherry. Oak was the main species in ditches 009, 012 and 338. It would have been chosen as the main fuelwood as it burns slowly, maintaining an even temperature (Cutler and Gale 2000, 205). This is ideal for fuel in a hearth or oven which would require a constant heat for relatively long periods of time. Hazel was the dominant species of charcoal in bank 037, and of particular interest was the large number of roundwood fragments. These had between eight to ten growth rings which suggests they could originate from coppiced woodland. The remaining charcoal recorded from the site consisted of alder/hazel, hawthorn/rowan/crab apple and cherry species which were most likely used within brushwood bundles as kindling for the fire.

Period 2: Medieval

Cereal crops played an important part in medieval diets with oats, free-threshing wheat and barley making up the bulk of the calorific intake (Stone 2006, 11–12). The cereals recovered from pit 153 and layer 090 within the kiln structure consisted predominantly of oats, with large amounts of barley and free-threshing wheat present. Small numbers of emmer/spelt wheat were identified, although these are most likely weed contaminants. There were no floret bases identified, so it was not possible to determine whether the oats were wild or cultivated although the large quantity recorded suggests cultivated oats were present. A similar assemblage to this was identified at nearby 'Harold's House' (WA 2007, 25–26).

The small quantity of cereal chaff recovered suggests the cereals were already processed/cleaned. The low number of samples containing cereals means it is not possible to determine whether the crops were being utilised for consumption or fodder, although the presence of a malting kiln on site does suggest one use of the cereals is for brewing. Wheat, barley and dredge (spring barley and oats) were commonly used for producing ale and would have been soaked in water to germinate. The sprouted grain would then be dried in a kiln to halt the germination process (Stone 2006, 13, 15–16).

Context number				008	090	152
Feature number				009	–	153
Sample number				11	1	4
Flot volume (ml)				104	85	191
Sample volume (l)				27	10	32
Phase				1	2	2
Plant macrofossil preservation				Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
Habitat Code	**Family**	**Species**	**Common Name**			
D/A	Amaranthaceae	*Chenopodium* spp	Fat hen/goosefoot spp	5	1	16
D/A		*Chenopodium* spp	Fat hen/goosefoot spp (mod)	17		6
A	Apiaceae	*Bupleurum rotundifolium*	Thorow–wax			1
A/D	Asteraceae	*Anthemis cotula*	Stinking chamomile			59
D/P		*Cirsium* spp/*Carduus* spp	Thistle spp (mod)	1		
HSW	Betulaceae	*Corylus avellana*	Hazelnut	10		3
A/D	Brassicaceae	*Brassica* spp/*Sinapsis* spp	Mustard/cabbage/charlock	1	6	5
A/D		*Raphanus raphanistrum*	Wild radish perianth	1		2
A/D	Caryophyllaceae	*Stellaria media*	Common chickweed	2		
A/D		*Stellaria media*	Common chickweed (mod)	4		
WL/D	Cyperaceae	*Carex* spp	Sedge	1		4
E	Fabaceae	*Lens culinaris*	Pulse		cf 1	
D/P	Fabaceae	*Medicago* spp/*trifolium* spp	Medick/clover spp	1		2
E		*Vicia faba*	Broad bean – whole			5
E		*Vicia faba*	Broad bean – half			10
A/P/D		*Vicia* spp/*Lathyrus* spp	Vetches/vetchlings (1–2mm) – half	2	5	43
A/P/D		*Vicia* spp/*Lathyrus* spp	Vetches/vetchlings (1–2mm) – whole	1		8
A/P/D		*Vicia* spp/*Lathyrus* spp	Vetches/vetchlings (2–3mm) – half			5
A/P/D		*Vicia* spp/*Lathyrus* spp	Vetches/vetchlings (2–3mm) – whole			6
D	Malvaceae	*Malva* spp	Mallow	2		1
D/P	Plantaginaceae	*Plantago lanceolata*	Ribwort plantain			1
E	Poaceae	*Avena* spp	Oat	3	7	596
E/A		*Avena spp/Bromus* spp	Oat/chess		1	
A		*Bromus* spp	Chess			6

A/D		*Festuca* spp/*Lolium* spp	Festuce/rye grass	3		
E		*Hordeum vulgare*	Hulled barley	4	2	241
D/P		*Poa spp*	Grass spp			1
E		*Triticum* spp	Wheat	1		62
E		*Triticum aestivum/turgidum/durum*	Free threshing wheat	2	3	164
E		*Triticum cf spelta*	Wheat cf spelt	cf 6		
E		*Triticum cf dicoccum*	Wheat cf emmer			cf 2
E		*Triticum cf dicoccum/spelta*	Wheat cf emmer/spelt			36
E		*Poaceae*	Indeterminate cereal grain (whole)	10	8	1607
E		*Poaceae*	Indeterminate cereal grain (fragments)			>1000
E		*Poaceae*	Palea			1
E		*Poaceae*	Rachis			1
E		*Poaceae*	Straw	1		
A/D/HSW	Polygonaceae	*Fallopia convolvulus*	Black–bindweed			1
A/D		*Persicaria* spp	Persicaria spp			19
A/D/HSW		*Rumex* spp	Dock spp		1	27
A/D/HSW		*Rumex* spp	Dock spp (mod)		1	
HSW/D	Rosaceae	*Rubus* spp	Bramble spp (mod)	2		
A/D	Rubiaceae	*Galium aparine*	Cleavers	12	7	1
			cf nut fragment		1	
Total				**92**	**44**	**3942 (+ >1000)**

Key: A = arable; D = disturbed ground; E = economic species; P = pasture; WL = marshland; HSW = hedgerow/scrub/woodland.

Table 6. Plant macrofossil identifications.

Context number			008	078	093	109	090	152
Feature number			009	338	012	037	–	153
Sample number			11	13	12	3	1	4
Sample volume (l)			27	10	10	10	10	32
Phase			1	1	1	1	2	2
Charcoal quantity			++++ (s)	++++	+++ (s)	++++	++++ (s)	++++
Charcoal preservation			Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Good	Moderate	Moderate
Family	**Species**	**Common Name**						
Betulaceae	*Alnus glutinosa/ Corylus avellana*	Alder/hazel	6	13		48	7	6
	Betula spp	Birch			1			
	Corylus avellana	Hazel	1	5		27		
	Corylus avellana	Hazel r/w		3		23		
Fagaceae	*Fagus sylvatica*	Beech					13	
	Quercus robur/petraea	Sessile/pedunculate oak	26	77	16	1	47	7
	Quercus robur/petraea	Sessile/pedunculate oak h/w	1				2	
Oleaceae	*Fraxinus excelsior*	Ash			2		2	
Rosaceae	*Crataegus monogyna/ Sorbus* spp/*Malus sylvestris*	Hawthorn/rowan/crab apple	6		4		25	
	Prunus spp	Cherry spp		2		1	4	2
		Indeterminate	6				16	3
		Number of Fragments:	40	100	23	100	100	15

Key: r/w = roundwood; h/w = heartwood.

Table:7. Charcoal identifications.

There was however no evidence of sprouting grains within any cereal waste on site which may be expected if malting was talking place, although post-depositional processes may have caused fragile sprouts to break off. It is also possible the cereal became accidentally burnt whilst being dried/heated to harden the grain prior to pounding/milling or to preserve for future use. In addition to cereals, a number of vetches and broad beans were recovered. Poor preservation meant these were not identifiable to species level, but it is possible they were consumed in pottages/stews. They were also known to be grown to fix nitrogen, thereby improving soil fertility.

The samples contained a number of weed species indicative of arable areas (stinking chamomile, thorow-wax, disturbed environments (mallow, fat hen/goosefoot) and marsh environments (sedge). The presence of stinking chamomile is interesting as it indicates a heavy clay soil (Stace 1997, 733). As the local yellow sandstone in this area produces a more sandy clay soil, it is possible these crops were cultivated on a more clay-rich area in the locality, or were brought in from elsewhere.

Charcoal identified from the layer within the kiln structure and pit 153 was dominated by oak with smaller quantities of alder/hazel, beech, ash, and hawthorn/rowan/crab apple and cherry species. These are all recorded as excellent fuelwoods and would have been ideal for using in hearths or ovens. By the medieval period, woodland in Wales was highly valued and a well-managed resource (Walker *et al*. 1997, 24). There was no direct evidence for woodland management within the charcoal assemblage so it is difficult to ascertain where the fuel wood originated from, but it is possible it was locally harvested from common land or hedgerows.

DISCUSSION

By Neil Holbrook and Mark Brett, with a contribution by Rachael Ives

The earliest activity at Sudbrook Road is represented by a small scatter of prehistoric artefacts found residually in later deposits. Most notable is the fragment of a Late Bronze Age socketed axe, which can now be added to the other single finds previously recorded in the Gwent (Gwilt 2004, Appendix 2, fig. 5.2). The absence of Late Iron Age pottery from the site is notable. The main focus of activity at this time presumably lay at the promontory fort at Sudbrook, which controlled the landing point of a ferry crossing across the Severn estuary (Nash-Williams 1939; Sell 2001; Howell and Pollard 2004, 151–2). The fort was occupied from around the second century BC onwards. There was, however, further Iron Age activity at Portskewett to the north-west of the Sudbrook Road site. Archaeological work in 1999 at Portskewett Primary School, Crick Road found a ditch filled with Late Iron Age pottery akin to that from Sudbrook and two brooches dating to *c*. 400–250 BC and 300–100 BC respectively. Early Roman pottery, but no features, was also recovered (Clarke 1999, 84–6, 101).

The promontory fort at Sudbrook continued to be of significance during the earliest Roman occupation of Wales, and Manning (1981, 41–2) has plausibly argued that it may have contained a military garrison there in the pre-Flavian period. The ferry crossing evidently retained its importance after the initial period of military occupation as later Roman finds have been recovered from the fort, and a branch road from the main coastal route between Chepstow and Caerwent can be traced as far as Portskewett. It presumably originally continued to Sudbrook (Margary 1973, Route 60aa). Indeed it would appear to be this route which is recorded as Iter XIV of the Antonine Itinerary with a crossing to Sea Mills on the opposite side of the Severn (Rivet and Smith 1979, 176–8).

There is no evidence for Roman activity at Sudbrook Road before the mid to later second century AD, the date of the pottery group from midden 015. Although material dating to the second

century was found within other features, it was only in the middens that it occurred exclusively without later material. It is likely that this was refuse dumped away from the main focus of the settlement. The pottery from the middens was dominated by kitchen wares with little evidence for higher status table wares. The middens also contained fragments of roofing tile which indicate the presence of a structure in the Roman architectural tradition at this time.

Construction of the enclosure represented by ditches 038 and 338 dates to the late third or fourth centuries AD, as pottery no earlier than the late third century AD was found within the colluvial layer which ditch 338 cut through. The enclosure ditches were allowed to silt up partially following their construction, with no evidence for re-cutting. The large quantities of animal bone within these primary fills testify to the dumping of domestic food waste within the ditches. The later fills derived from episodes of slumping, probably from internal bank 037, and seemingly deliberate backfilling.

As only two sides were exposed, and one of those only partially, it is difficult to reconstruct the plan of the enclosure, although the right-angled corner suggests a square or rectangular layout in excess of 60m x 45m. There appears to have been an entrance in the south side of the enclosure leading down to the adjacent watercourse. Also of some possible significance is the location of a large, roughly hewn sandstone block within the inside corner of the enclosure ditches. This clearly overhangs the western edge of ditch 038 and could conceivably represent a toppled upright stone marker, perhaps demarcating the south-eastern limit of an earlier land division subsequently formalised by the digging of the ditches. Internal bank 037 survived up to 5m wide, suggesting that originally it constituted a considerable feature, perhaps 2–3m high. The bank may have served as a convenient place to dump domestic rubbish, away from the main focus of settlement, as suggested at Thornwell Farm, Chepstow (Hughes 1996, 97). The bank therefore need not be of a single phase of construction and as such the sherds of shell-tempered pottery recovered from the bank, which are datable to after *c*. AD 350/60, need not indicate its original date.

The bank and ditches would have defined a substantial enclosure. Apart from ditches 005 and 012 within the north-western part of the excavation area which probably relate to internal division or drainage, and pit 113 just inside bank 037, there is no evidence for structures or industrial activity within the enclosure. Indeed it is most likely to have had a primarily agricultural purpose associated with stock management, the entrance to the south providing access to the riverside. The original size of the enclosure can only be conjectured, although it is significant that no Roman features were found in the limited evaluation at the 'Harold's House' site to the west.

The nature of Roman occupation at Portskewett remains elusive. The Sudbrook Road enclosure appears to be peripheral to the main focus of settlement, although evidence of one or more high status structures is provided by fragments of *opus signinum* found residually within a medieval context, as well as other fragments found during the evaluation (GGAT 1995) and at the adjacent 'Harold's House' site (WA 2007). No evidence for any structures of this type was found either at Sudbrook Road or 'Harold's House'. The *opus signinum* could conceivably derive from the building on Portskewett Hill, 700m to the north, which Wheeler (1923) interpreted as a temple, but given the recovery of iron slag might more likely have been a villa (Brewer 2004, 225). Perhaps more plausible is the presence of high status buildings nearer to Sudbrook Road, perhaps on the flatter, more elevated land just to the north under the modern houses on Canterbury Way (Fig. 2). While a villa is the most likely origin for the building materials, a mansio on the road leading up from the Sudbrook ferry landing is also possible.

Occupation at Portskewett from the later second century fits with the emerging pattern of sites established on the edge of the Caldicot Level. Reclamation of the Level appears to have commenced

in the second century to judge from excavated evidence at Goldcliff and Nash (Bell 1994, 136–42; Meddens and Beasley 2001). Whether this was an extensive and systematic programme as has been suggested for the Wentlooge Level to the west of the Usk, or somewhat more piecemeal, is currently unclear (Rippon 1996, 25–35). That at least some of the reclaimed land on the Caldicot Level fell within the legionary *territorium* of Caerleon, is suggested by the inscription from Goldcliff Point, recording work by the Second Legion (RIB 395).

A number of other fen edge settlements in the vicinity of Portskewett have been investigated (Rippon 1996, 34–5, fig. 7A). Stoop Hill, Caldicot, 3.4km to the south-west has been claimed as a villa on account of a regular rectangular enclosure visible as a cropmark, although evaluation work revealed no evidence of high status (Robinson 1988, pl. B1; Brewer 2004, 234). Other enclosures have been examined at Church Farm, Caldicot (Insole 2000), which dates no earlier than the late second century and could be as late as the fourth century, and Caerwent Quarry, Caldicot (Vyner and Allen 1988) where occupation appears to run from the second half of the first century AD until the middle of the fourth.

Activity at Sudbrook Road apparently ceased shortly after the middle of the fourth century. The latest of the eight coins was minted in AD 343–8 and only eight sherds of shell-tempered ware which date to after *c*. AD 350/60 were recovered. Combined with the absence of coins of the House of Valentinian, this suggests that activity probably did not continue much beyond AD 360, if we assume that the dates of the latest artefacts provide a true reflection of the date of activity rather than just the occupants dispensing with the use of new coins and pottery types. Sudbrook Road therefore fits into the well established general pattern of the abandonment of rural sites in south east Wales during the fourth century (Robinson 1988, xxi–xxvi). Coinage is comparatively well represented on rural sites in the hinterland of Caerwent compared to other sites in southern Wales. At Church Farm, Caldicot, 27 coins were found, of which 24 came from a hoard with a *terminus post quem* of AD 346 (Insole 2000; Guest and Wells 2007, nos. 64 and 66). At Caerwent Quarry, Caldicot the 32 coins are consistent with occupation until the AD 370s (Vyner and Allen 1988, 91; Guest and Wells 2007, no. 65). At Sudbrook Road the eight coins recovered focus on the late third and first half of the fourth century. Abandonment of sites on the Caldicot Level and fen edge might have been a result of either increased flooding or general insecurity in the countryside, encouraging relocation to within the walls of Caerwent.

By the end of the fourth century the enclosure ditches were largely filled, although the banks would have remained a visible landscape feature, and indeed this is demonstrated by the recutting of the enclosure ditch in during the twelfth to thirteenth century. Filling the gap between the end of the Roman occupation and that of the post-Norman period is the single inhumation burial which was interred immediately outside of the south-east corner of the still visible enclosure. This has been radiocarbon dated to the later seventh to eighth century (Table 8). The only other evidence for activity at this time is a single residual sherd of organic-tempered pottery of likely sixth to ninth-century AD date. The significance of the burial is that it is the first archaeological evidence which might be related to the pre-Norman royal court (*llys*) which Knight (2004, 282–3) suggests was situated at Portskewett. The individual was presumably interred in a peripheral location to the main focus of activity at this time, which was most likely at 'Harold's House'.

Of the four early medieval cemeteries that have been identified in south-east Wales (see Evans, 2003), two have been identified in the area surrounding Portskewett (Evans 2003). One was found within the Roman walls at Caerwent (100 burials) dating to the seventh and eigth centuries (ibid., 11), the second comprising 136 dating from the fifth to the eleventh century was found overlying Roman activity at the Vicarage Orchard site outside of the east gate of Caerwent to the west of

Feature	Lab No.	Material	δ 13C	Radiocarbon Age	95%	68%
Burial 259	GU26554 SUERC-38912	Human bone – Left fibia	-19.4‰	1285 ± 30 yr BP	662–778 AD (95.4% of area)	675–720 AD (41.4% of area) plus 742–770 AD (26.8 % of area)

The sample was successfully dated using the AMS method. The uncalibrated dates are conventional radiocarbon ages. The radiocarbon ages were calibrated using the calibration programme OxCal 4.1 (Bronk Ramsey 2009) using the IntCal09 curve.

Table 8. Radiocarbon dates from Burial 259.

Portskewett (Campbell and Macdonald 1994). Episodes of seemingly isolated early medieval burials have also been found close to Portskewett, including at Caerleon where a burial was cut into the Roman walls of the town gates and a second burial was uncovered at Mill Street in Caerleon. Evans (2003) suggested these may represent burials placed adjacent to areas of habitation, which is unusual. It is not clear whether this could explain the burial from Portskewett.

Evidence for secular settlement sites dating between the end of the Roman period and prior to the Norman Conquest is also limited in and surrounding Monmouth, with the closest sites identified in Glamorgan to the west, in the Taff Valley near Cardiff, and at Gelliagaer to the north (Browne and Hughes 2003). No settlement site has, however, been found associated with an established or dedicated cemetery from this period in south-east Wales.

It would appear that the remnant traces of the Roman enclosure were reused as convenient boundary features for the post-Norman use of the site, augmented by the addition of further earthwork banks and the re-cutting of the ditches. The medieval ditches were shallower than their Roman predecessors, but like them served as a convenient location for the disposal of domestic waste, including significant quantities of animal bone, sometimes found in discrete concentrated dumps. Metalworking slag was also found in the ditches.

The earliest subdivision of the excavation area was by linear ditches 027 and 042, which produced an abundance of pottery and animal bone. Large ditch 022 extending along the southern edge of the site (which cut ditch 027) and the medieval re-cutting of Roman ditch 038 on the eastern side, together with their associated external banks, formed a major boundary. It is highly likely that the ditch and external bank identified by earthwork survey and trial trenching at 'Harold's House' which curved around the base of the slope below the manorial complex were a continuation of the same circuit which flanked the edges of the palaeochannels and encompassed the manor. Thirteenth-century pottery was recovered from the upper fill of the ditch at 'Harold's House'. Three sides of the medieval enclosure can be discerned on modern aerial photographs of the site and although all traces of the northern part have been eradicated by modern development, it is evident that the enclosure was *c*. 200m east to west and at least 140m from north to south. Internally, a series of concentric ditches (020, 040 etc.) enclosed the most elevated part of the site. These ditches are likely to represent episodic re-establishment of a boundary which may have included bank 014 at one stage. A rectilinear plot, defined by ditches 031 and 035, replaced the curvilinear arrangement.

Within the enclosure spasmodic small scale-quarrying of sandstone in the twelfth to fourteenth century is indicated by quarry pits. 284 and 331, and these are perhaps to be related to the construction of stone buildings at the manorial complex centred on 'Harold's House'. While there is the famous reference to the construction of Harold Godwinson's hunting lodge in 1063, and the manor is recorded at Domesday, the 2007 evaluation at 'Harold's House' demonstrated that the bulk at least of the earthworks and structures there appear to be associated with the manor recorded in 1270 in the possession of the Deneband family (Thompson and Birbeck 2010). A possible quarry pit beneath one of the buildings at 'Harold's House' produced late twelfth to thirteenth-century pottery.

A free-standing malting kiln was constructed over backfilled quarry pit 331. It was doubtless part of the later medieval manorial complex, presumably situated away from the main domestic structures to lessen the risk of fire. The kiln is of typical medieval form, with the thick walls providing both heat insulation and support for the suspended floor above the chamber (cf. the discussion of the malting kilns in the Raunds area of Northamptonshire; Chapman 2010, 225–32). A kiln of comparable form and date has been excavated within the Middle Ward at Montgomery Castle (Knight 1993, 161–5). Kilns of this form are generally referred to as malting kilns (that is structures where sprouted barley is spread on the suspended floor and dried to produce malt for use in brewing ale). The plant remains from the stoking area (Table 6, context 090) were small in quantity and do not provide any certain evidence for malting, although barley is represented. The kilns at West Cotton, Northamptonshire, did produce palaeobotanical evidence for malting, although they were also used for drying grain (Campbell 2010, 428–98), and generally a range of plant types have been recovered from these structures, including oats as found here (Moffett 2006, 52–3). Charcoal from the base of the chamber indicates the range of fuel woods used to fire the kiln.

The pottery from Sudbrook Road accords with that from 'Harold's House' and indicates that later medieval occupation of the manor was concentrated in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. It is suggested at 'Harold's House' that demolition of the manorial structures may have taken place in the fifteenth century, and that thereafter occupation shifted to nearby Manor Farm where the extant building dates from the sixteenth or seventeenth centuries (Thompson and Birbeck 2010).

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A STUDY OF THE MAGNIFICENT REMNANT OF A TREE OF JESSE AT ST MARY'S PRIORY CHURCH, ABERGAVENNY: PART ONE

By Muriel Adams

Introduction

It is the intention of this article, published in two parts, to draw attention to the historical importance of the late fifteenth-century oak figure of Jesse, the only remnant of a Tree of Jesse sculpted for St Mary's Priory, Abergavenny, and to emphasise its status as a unique survivor in Europe (Fig. 1). The first part of the article will address the form of the Jesse figure, the biblical origins of the Tree of Jesse, some examples of its history in art and religion and the role of visual imagery in religious teaching. Part two will examine the survival of Abergavenny's medieval monuments, offer some thoughts on the commissioning of the Tree of Jesse and reflect upon the adoption of St Mary's Priory as a parish church.

There is some debate among art historians regarding the exact date of Abergavenny's Jesse sculpture. Peter Lord describes it as 'early 15th century',[1] whereas Phillip Lindley considers it to be a work of the late fifteenth century.[2] Carol Galvin, conservator, also declares the work to be of the late fifteenth century,[3] and since the priory was forced to seek a papal grant of indulgence in 1428 in order to repair the fabric of its buildings,[4] the later date would seem more reasonable. It is unlikely that a patron would endow so magnificent an artwork as the original Tree of Jesse must have been for installation in a building in need of urgent repair.

It is a matter of extraordinary good fortune that the figure of Jesse, largely ignored for several centuries, survives at all. Abergavenny was a comparatively unimportant Welsh borough and the priory not only of foreign foundation, but also one that suffered extreme scandal in the early fourteenth century when a papal investigation deemed it a disgrace to the Benedictine Order.[5] Nevertheless, well before the time of the installation of the Tree of Jesse it was to St Mary's that the powerful families of Hastings, de Braose and Herbert turned for burial and memorial. That the church holds such an impressive array of monuments, 'only surpassed in number by those of the great cathedrals and of the church of All Saints, Harewood in Yorkshire',[6] indicates the importance of the priory beyond the southern March and the bounds of ancient Gwent.

The monuments have been written about at length.[7] In contrast, Jesse has been described as, 'an extraordinary figure [which] has … escaped the notice of previous scholars of British medieval

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1 Lord, Peter, *The Visual Culture of Wales: Medieval Vision* (University of Wales Press, Cardiff, 2003), 207.

2 Lindley, Phillip, 'From Romanesque to Reformation', in Deacon, Richard and Lindley, Phillip, *Image and Idol: Medieval Sculpture* (Tate Publishing, 2001) 68.

3 Galvin, Carol, personal conversation at St Mary's Abergavenny, 22 November, 2012.

4 Williams, Glanmor, *The Welsh Church: from Conquest to Reformation* (University of Wales Press, Cardiff, 1976), 232.

5 Hopkins, Tony, 'The Towns', Griffiths, Ralph A. (general ed.), *The Gwent County History, Volume 2* (University of Wales Press on behalf of the Gwent County History Association, Cardiff, 2008), 131.

6 Rock, Vivienne, 'The Medieval Monuments at St Mary's Priory Church, Abergavenny, Gwent' (*Medieval Life*, Issue 3, 1995), 17.

7 See, for example, Morgan, Octavius, *Some Account of the Ancient Monuments in the Priory Church, Abergavenny* (Monmouthshire and Caerleon Antiquarian Association, Newport, 1872), Rock, 'The Medieval Monuments at St Mary's Priory Church', 17–24, and Lindley, Phillip, 'Two Fourteenth Century Tomb Monuments at Abergavenny and the Mournful End of the Hastings Earls of Pembroke', Kenyon, John R. and Williams, Diane, eds., *Architecture and Archaeology in the Medieval Diocese of Llandaff* (British Archaeological Association Conference Transaction Series, Cardiff, 2006), 136–59.

Fig. 1: The Jesse Figure at St Mary's Priory Church, Abergavenny. Oak, late 15th century, length 2.94m. *With kind permission of Trefor Morris and Paul Thompson, Manager of the St Mary's Priory House Company.*

sculpture'.[8] Consequently, this article aims to achieve some redressing of the balance through examination of Abergavenny's Jesse as an art-historical, religious and social object in the context of the different media and forms in which the Tree of Jesse was represented in medieval and early modern Europe.

Abergavenny's Benedictine priory was established between 1087 and 1109 and initially peopled by a prior and twelve monks drawn from the abbey of St Vincent and St Lawrence at Le Mans.[9] It was built outside the town's east gate and dedicated to the Virgin Mary. Archaeological investigation has uncovered much about the medieval town, its defences and its commerce.[10] The priory, too, has enjoyed the attention of archaeologists but there is little to be seen today of St Mary's original, Norman structure and nothing of its conventual buildings. Most of the surviving medieval buildings, the tower, the nave, chancel, transepts and adjoining chapels, were erected in 1320 when John de Hastings the younger (1287–1325), then lord of Abergavenny, commissioned the building work as part of his mission to reform the house.[11] Concurrent with this act of faith

8 Lindley, 'From Romanesque to Reformation', 51.

9 *Calendar of Documents Preserved in France*, calendared by Round, J. H. (London, 1899), 367–8, quoted in Crouch, David, 'The Transformation of Medieval Gwent', *Gwent County History, Volume 2*, 17.

10 Olding, Frank, *Discovering Abergavenny: Archaeology and History* (Abergavenny Local History Society, Abergavenny, 2012), 37–43.

11 Cowley, F.G., *The Monastic Order in South Wales, 1066–1349* (University of Wales Press, Cardiff, 1977), 109–12.

disaster struck Abergavenny and the surrounding country when, between 1315 and 1322, rain fell ceaselessly, harvests failed and animals sickened and died.[12] The Black Death reached Abergavenny in 1348 killing, among many others, Laurence de Hastings, earl of Pembroke, who was buried at St Mary's. The outbreak of 1348–9, which, it is estimated, killed between a third and a quarter of the population, was followed by others. It is no wonder, observes Rees Davies, that the plague was known as 'Y Farwolaeth Fawr', the 'Great Death', in Wales.[13]

Such critical social disruption might have had a part to play in the lack of medieval ecclesiastical records (for which Gwent is infamous).[14] None of St Mary's records have been found and there is little extant documentation relevant to the priory until well into the sixteenth century.[15] Records *were* kept: we are told that 'the monks of Abergavenny kept a set of annals and genealogical notes relating to their patrons' families'.[16] What, then, led to their disappearance? Matters could not have been helped by the lack of income suffered by alien priories such as St Mary's during the Hundred Years War (dated by convention 1337–1453). But poverty would not have destroyed the records and it is more likely that Owain Glyn Dŵr's revolt which 'lit the touchpaper of local discontent' and led to the firing of the town and the priory in 1404 was largely responsible for the loss.[17] Even then some at least might have survived until Priory House fell into private hands. James Gunter of Breconshire was granted the manor of Monktown following the dissolution of the monasteries in 1535.[18] The Gunter family lived at Priory House for five generations: did the priory's records or the remnants thereof come into their keeping? If so, they passed with them from history. Consequently discussion of the construction and appearance of the complete Tree of Jesse, its patron, and where it might have first been placed within St Mary's Priory cannot be anything but informed conjecture. In contrast, it will be possible to analyse and discuss with some degree of certainty the biblical origins of the Tree of Jesse, the many different forms the Tree might take, the meaning the Tree conveyed to worshippers, the role of visual imagery in communicating religious teaching, the working methods by which sculptures in wood were constructed in the fifteenth century and the nature and significance of changes in the purpose of the Tree of Jesse over the centuries as a paradigm that should also apply to the Jesse at St Mary's.

St Mary's Jesse Figure

There was much church rebuilding in Gwent towards the end of the fifteenth century. For example, at Mathern, the thirteenth-century church was extended and given a new west tower by Bishop John Marshal of Llandaff (1478–96), and at the Benedictine nunnery of St Mary's Priory, Usk, the north aisle of the church was made much wider.[19] At St Woolos, Newport, the earlier church was given larger aisles, an imposing south porch and a new west tower.[20] The contemporaneous commissioning of the Jesse Tree and the refurbishment of the choir-stalls at St Mary's might reasonably be said then to participate in the confidence of the early Tudor period.

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12 Kissock, Jonathan, 'Settlement and Society', *Gwent County History, Volume 2*, 83.
13 Davies, R. R., 'Plague and Revolt', *Gwent County History, Volume 2*, 222.
14 Davies, E. T., *Ecclesiastical History of Monmouthshire* (Starsons Ltd., Risca, 1953), 91.
15 Lindley, Phillip, *Tomb Destruction and Scholarship: Medieval Monuments in Early Modern England* (Shaun Tyas, Spalding, 2007), 203.
16 Cowley, *The Monastic Order in South Wales, 1066–1349*, 196.
17 Hopkins, 'The Towns', *Gwent County History, Volume 2*, 122.
18 Olding, *Discovering Abergavenny*, 55.
19 Newman, John, *The Buildings of Gwent/Monmouthshire* (Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 2000), 585.
20 Knight, Jeremy, 'The Parish Churches', *Gwent County History, Volume 2*, 171.

By this time Abergavenny was becoming a commercially significant town; it benefited, as did other towns in the Marches, from the imposition of order that was a priority during the reign of Henry VII (1485–1509). Henry was thought of by the Welsh as 'their' king, although, advises S. B. Chrimes, his Welshness is often exaggerated. Nevertheless he was brought up in Wales and, Chrimes agrees, owed much to Welsh support when he marched to victory at Bosworth in 1485.[21] It is interesting to consider whether Henry's perceived Welshness was the reason for an impressive number of Jesse Tree windows, which are, in fact, family trees, being commissioned in north Wales at the end of the fifteenth century and the start of the sixteenth. By as early as the late Middle Ages the symbol of a branching tree had been adopted as an effective means of demonstrating family pedigree and, perhaps, it was such an earthly concern that prompted a wealthy patron with connections to Abergavenny to underwrite the creation of a magnificent Jesse Tree for the priory.

The Tree was initially damaged by iconoclasts during the Reformations of the sixteenth century and sustained further damage when General Fairfax billeted Cromwell's soldiers at Abergavenny during the Commonwealth (1649–1660).[22] The effigy of Jesse that visitors to St Mary's Priory Church, admire today was described in 1906 by the historian J.A. Bradney (1859–1933), as 'rudely carved'.[23] Almost a hundred years later art historian Phillip Lindley judged it to be, 'without doubt one of the finest pieces of fifteenth-century wood sculpture remaining in England or Wales'.[24] For Bradney, possibly an admirer of the neoclassical tradition of sculpture, it is likely that the powerful figure of Jesse did appear rough hewn; many historians of his period and later were of the view that there was no craftsmanship in Britain in the medieval or early modern period and some, as Eamon Duffy notes, have considered the years before the Reformation merely as, 'a set on which the real drama of Reformation was to take place'.[25] This is not the current view; in both the popular history of Andrew Graham-Dixon,[26] for example, and the scholarly work of Eamon Duffy in England and Madeleine Gray in Wales,[27] the vitality, interest and beauty of late medieval and early modern images are fully recognised.

The choice of oak for the Tree of Jesse sculpture was important. Medieval craftsmen knew of oak's lasting qualities, for it is a hard, compact and durable wood as testified by the survival of the Jesse and other oak carvings of the late fifteenth century still to be seen in what is now St Mary's Priory Church. Carol Galvin, who led the conservation of the Jesse sculpture in 1993, calculates that the tree from which the figure of Jesse was carved had been growing for about four hundred years and its trunk would have had a circumference of approximately twenty-two feet. When felled, the trunk would have been split along its length and one of the two resultant pieces set aside for a short period before being sculpted as the figure of Jesse. The figure is almost ten feet long, three feet high and two feet deep. (Galvin prefers to use imperial measurements when describing the figure since such were the measurements used by the sculptor.) The flat base of the figure indicates that its original position was on a ledge or supporting plinth. There are two original handmade nails on

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21 Chrimes, S. B., *Henry VII*, first pub. 1972 (Eyre Methuen, London, 1977), 3.

22 Morgan, *Ancient Monuments in the Priory Church, Abergavenny*, 20.

23 Bradney, Sir J.A., *A History of Monmouthshire, Part 2, The Hundred of Abergavenny* (Mitchell Hughes and Clarke, London, 1923, reprinted by Merton Priory Press, 1993), 163.

24 Lindley, 'From Romanesque to Reformation', 50.

25 Duffy, Eamon, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, 1400–1580* (Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1992), 6.

26 Graham-Dixon, Andrew, *A History of British Art* (London: BBC Books, 1996).

27 Gray, Madeleine, *Images of Piety: the Iconography of Traditional Religion in Late Medieval Wales* (BAR British Series 316, 2000); Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*.

its back, part of the system of fixing the figure to the wall or supporting framework. Jesse holds a branch in his left hand that has already divided into two; the branches each of six inches in diameter are now truncated but would have spread upwards to left and right encircling and supporting sculptures of prophets and ancestors of Christ. Jesse's size suggests the complete sculpture was of huge proportions. John Newman, comparing it with a stone Jesse Tree of 1330, which forms the tracery of a window in the sanctuary of Dorchester Abbey, Oxfordshire, argues that in size they would have been comparable. Abergavenny's Tree, he believes, would have risen to the uppermost reaches of the priory and possibly, as a reredos, or altarpiece, occupied the entire wall of a chapel.[28] And it is even possible that the sculptured oak of St Mary's Tree would have captured the organic essence of a real tree in a manner denied to sculptures in stone.

Abergavenny's Jesse is depicted as aged, long-haired and magnificently bearded. He rests on his right side, in a strong, horizontal position. He is not asleep as is often the case, his eyes are half open; he seems somewhat world weary. His right hand, originally carved separately and attached to his body with a wooden dowel, is missing. A small, once golden-haired angel holds a cushion under his head by the sizeable tassels at its corners. Galvin points out the decoration on this cushion, now most clearly seen on its back, as the most beautiful of the entire sculpture. It was decorated to give the impression of patterned brocade embossed with raised gold thread, an impression achieved through the skilful application of a preset paste of resin and beeswax which was then painted and gilded. The back of the angel's right shoulder bears an incision that once, in all probability, was the position of a separately sculpted wing. A triangular-shaped hollow at the base of Jesse's beard and a precise but shallow disc depression on the centre front of his cap indicate that there might originally have been decorative features there. Galvin suggests that the shape and position of the empty circular indentation on the front of Jesse's cap could once have contained an object such as an enamelled ornament, whereas the curving grain around the irregular hollow in his beard indicates that this is simply the site of a natural knot in the wood.

Over his belted robe, Abergavenny's sculptor has given Jesse a mantle which swirls around his shoulders, apparently curves beneath him and re-emerges to wrap his lower body in sweeping folds which his raised knee lifts just enough to allow his right foot, clad in a close-fitting shoe, to be seen. The original structure was brightly painted: it is still possible to see traces of pink flesh tones on Jesse's left arm, and specks of a chestnut red in the folds of his robe, under the narrow, buckled belt. Galvin's technical investigations, which involved magnifying and identifying cross-sections of paint samples, show that Jesse's beard was grey, his robe was a rich red and his mantle, patterned in red, black and gold, had a bright blue lining. He has lost his left foot, possibly sawn off simply to fit the effigy into a smaller space. Archdeacon William Coxe, who visited St Mary's in 1798, records seeing what he believed to be a huge figure of St Christopher, in the middle window of the north aisle of the choir, there can be little doubt that it was not another, now vanished, sculpture of St Christopher that Coxe saw, but the Jesse, 'with a long beard and flowing hair, carved out of a single piece of wood'.[29] It is, perhaps, not surprising that such confusion should occur. Not only was St Christopher painted or carved in many medieval churches, for it was believed that to see him was to be protected from harm for the day, but there are also strong similarities between a large sculpted St Christopher bearing the Christ child upon his shoulder and a large sculpted Jesse with a small angel at his shoulder. Perhaps it was to fit into the confined space of this window ledge that Jesse's left foot and the angel's wings were removed.

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[28] Newman, *Buildings of Gwent/Monmouthshire*, 94.

[29] Coxe, William, *A Historical Tour in Monmouthshire* (first pub. 1801, reprinted by Merton Priory Press, Cardiff, 1995), 193.

It is Galvin's view that neither the sculptor nor the painter of Abergavenny's Jesse belonged to a provincial workshop. Yet one wonders why this should be so. Glanmor Williams notes a thirteenth-century list of Merioneth occupations in which the carpenters were the most highly assessed for tax purposes.[30] They were greatly esteemed and those of the Marches were evidently well able to produce such fine surviving sculptures as the rood screens in Llananno in Radnorshire, Llanwnnog in Montgomeryshire and, close to Abergavenny, the rood-screen and loft of *c*. 1500 in Patrishow in Breconshire, which, 'arguably rank among the finest achievements of the medieval woodworker'.[31] Such fine and detailed carving suggests that the sculptors were more than capable of producing Abergavenny's Jesse. As Williams proposes, 'it would be risky to suppose that such consummate artists in timber were incapable of extending their art to embrace human form.'[32]

The Biblical Origins of the Tree of Jesse and Some Examples of its History in Art and Religion

Jesse was the father of King David the founder of the 'House of David', the root of the royal dynasty from which Jews hoped a saviour, a Messiah, would arise. For Christians, Jesus of Nazareth became the Messiah and in medieval and later times this biblical metaphor was translated into numberless Jesse Trees, portraying ancestors of Christ in stained glass, stone, wood and other media. The renowned French art historian, Émile Mâle, notes that, 'Of all the prophecies one alone inspired art in any lasting fashion'.[33] His reference is to the prophecy of Isaiah:

> And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots. And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord.[34]

Mâle also tells us that he is unaware of any example earlier than that depicted in stained glass at the east end of the abbey church of Saint-Denis in 1144.[35] Arthur Watson, who has written in depth on the Tree of Jesse, qualifies this opinion by describing the Tree of Jesse window at Saint-Denis, in a composition later recreated at Chartres in 1145, as conforming only to Mâle's 'true formula' for a Tree of Jesse which had to include a recumbent Jesse, a royal genealogy, and representations of the Virgin, Christ, prophets and the seven doves.[36] Moreover, when the earliest representations of the ancestors of Christ were depicted in the eleventh century it was often in a very different form from that of the complete Tree as Mâle visualised it. It was not thought necessary always to represent Christ and the Virgin by figures in human form. The Virgin's scriptural prefigurations included such varied and unexpected themes as Jacob's ladder and the burning bush of Moses.[37] It is possible to understand the Virgin as a ladder, the servant of God while on earth and a powerful intercessor and protector of mankind in heaven but her prefiguration as a burning bush is, perhaps, not so clear. Miri Rubin attempts to explain the association with a quotation from Ripoll monastery's *Advocaciones de la Virgen*:

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30 Williams, Glanmor, *Renewal and Reformation Wales: c.1415–1642* (Oxford University Press, 1993), 148.
31 Wheeler, Richard, *The Medieval Church Screens of the Southern Marches* (Logaston Press, Herefordshire, 2006), 6.
32 Williams, *The Welsh Church*, 443.
33 Mâle, Émile, *The Gothic Image*, first edn. 1910 (Collins Fontana Library, London, 1961), 165.
34 *Holy Bible*, Isaiah, Chapter 11:1–2.
35 Mâle, *The Gothic Image*, 170–71.
36 Watson, Arthur, *The Early Iconography of the Tree of Jesse* (Oxford University Press, 1934), 78.
37 *Ibid*., 2.

> Moses the Law-giver, true witness of the Virgin Mary, saw a bush that was burning, in which there was a pyre, and God's majesty stood in the middle of the pyre, and neither the bush nor the Majesty burned. So neither Mary's blessed virginity nor the divinity of heaven was harmed in conception or in virgin birth.[38]

Perhaps most significantly in relation to the Tree of Jesse, the Virgin was also represented by three *virgae* [green rods], the *virga* Moses, the *virga* Aaron and the *virga* Jesse.[39] The *virga* Jesse, the rod of Jesse, is, of course, referred to in the prophecy in the Book of Isaiah already quoted. As early as the third century, notes Gray, 'the rod from the stem of Jesse was understood to be Mary herself, and the Mass of the Virgin refers punningly to her as the *virga*, the rod'.[40] When visual representations of the Tree of Jesse began to be created, the Tree's central rod ascended to Mary, maintaining the relationship between the rod and the Virgin. For example, a twelfth-century Tree of Jesse sculpted on the west front of Notre-Dame, Poitiers, depicts Jesse with rods growing out of the sides of his head. Above his head is an open flower, possibly a lily, upon which perches a single dove.[41] This image may be read as the Annunciation, presenting Mary (the flower) and the dove of the Holy Spirit at the moment of the Incarnation.[42]

The number of surviving twelfth-century examples of the Tree of Jesse indicates its broad appeal at that period. James R. Johnson suggests that the increasing emphasis on the Madonna in the art and literature of the time made both the ecclesiastical and lay population highly receptive to the Jesse Tree imagery to which Mary is central.[43] By the twelfth century, too, the prominence of the kings of the House of David in many Trees of Jesse, including the highly developed window at Chartres, was seen by the Capetian kings of France, Louis VI (1108–1137) and Louis VII (1137–1180), as an opportunity to promote themselves. With the support of those such as Abbé Suger, the force behind the creation of the Tree of Jesse window at Saint-Denis, they integrated their kingship festivals with church festivals and it became the custom for monarchs, like priests, to be anointed with holy oil.[44] Mâle notes that on the façade of almost all thirteenth-century French cathedrals, particularly those dedicated to the Virgin Mary, for example at Chartres, Notre Dâme, and Reims, there are colossal sculptures of kings. Long thought to be kings of France they are, in fact, kings of Judah. The sculptures are the Tree of Jesse in another form, the kings of the house of David, ancestors of the Virgin, are there to honour her and her Son.[45]

Michael D. Taylor puts forward an alternative argument for the origins of the Tree of Jesse; he believes the Tree to have been created in order to combat Catharist heresy.[46] By the mid-1160s Cathars had been driven from northern France, Germany and the Low Countries to Languedoc in the south of France where their heretical church gained such strength that by the end of the twelfth

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38 A. Sinues Ruis, 'Advocaciones de la Virgen en un códice del siglio XII', *Analecta Sacra Tarraconensia* 21 (1948), 25, quoted in Rubin, Miri, *Mother of God: a History of the Virgin Mary* (Yale University Press, Newhaven, 2009), 178.

39 Watson, *Early Iconography*, 2.

40 Gray, *Images of Piety*, 13.

41 Watson, *Early Iconography*, Plate IV.

42 Gray, *Images of Piety*, 13.

43 Johnson, James R., 'The Tree of Jesse Window of Chartres: Laudes Regiae', *Speculum*, Vol. 36, No. 1 (Jan., 1961), 3.

44 Kantorowicz, Ernst, *Laudes Regiae: A Study in Liturgical Acclamations and Mediaeval Ruler Worship* (University of California Press, 1946), 92, quoted in Johnson, 'The Tree of Jesse Window of Chartres', 5–6.

45 Mâle, *The Gothic Image*, 166–68.

46 Taylor, Michael D., 'A Historiated Tree of Jesse', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, Vol. 34/35 (1980/1981), 149.

century they were able to argue their position on almost equal terms with orthodox believers.[47] At the centre of their theology was the view that all matter is evil. God is perfect, they argued, but nothing in the world is perfect, therefore nothing in the world was made by God. They completely rejected the Old Testament, likening the behaviour of Jehovah to that of Satan.[48] Christ was not God made man, they argued, but an angel sent by God to show people the way to salvation. A Tree of Jesse, however, shows Jesus born of Mary with generations of royal forbears who demonstrate not only the royalty but also the humanity of Christ. For Orthodox Christians Christ is both God and man and his body and blood are present in the bread and wine offered to the faithful in the sacrament of Holy Communion. The transubstantiation of the elements could not occur without the Incarnation and the Cathar denial of the humanity of Christ completely undermined the sacrament of the Mass. Taylor suggests, therefore, that the Jesse Tree, 'must have answered the Church's demand for a more impressive and forceful demonstration of prophetic and genealogical proofs of Christ's humanity to answer this challenge'.[49]

As early as the thirteenth century, a degree of iconographical uniformity could be seen in depictions of the Tree of Jesse, although some remained delightfully idiosyncratic such as a Tree of Jesse carved *c*. 1200 upon an ivory comb. This panel depicts Jesse, with hair and beard flowing and a steady gaze, with the tree emerging from his navel. Two branches form a mandorla, an almond-shaped aureole, around the seated Virgin who raises one hand to support the precariously poised Christ Child, who seems ready to be tossed into the air. Two prophets, one on either side of the Virgin, hold scrolls and point towards Christ as if to say 'Here is the Messiah and we foretold his coming'.[50]

Figures on the Trees varied in number and identity and carried subtly different messages. In the thirteenth-century Scherenberg Psalter, Jesse sleeps on a beautifully patterned bed while Mary and the Child are accompanied by only two kings, David and Solomon, and two prophets, Isaiah and Jeremiah.[51] Isaiah, as already noted, prophesied that Jesse would be the root of the house of David from which the Messiah would be born, while the Book of Jeremiah, known for its record of the prophet's despair and his warnings of the fall of Jerusalem, also includes hope for a coming Davidic Messiah.[52] The British Museum's twelfth-century Lansdowne Psalter illuminated manuscript shows Jesse lying asleep with King David, holding the lower ends of two scrolls, immediately above him.[53] Above David is Mary, crowned, and above her is Christ, his right hand raised in blessing. At the summit of the illustration is the dove, the Holy Spirit. The two other figures represented here are the prophet Abraham and the law-giver Moses, two of the earliest important Hebrew figures. Abraham, the earliest ancestor of Christ named in St Matthew's genealogy,[54] holds a scroll with a

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47 Sumption, Jonathan, *The Albigensian Crusade*, first pub. 1978 (Faber and Faber, London and New York, 1999), 41.

48 *Ibid*., 48–9.

49 Taylor, 'A Historiated Tree of Jesse', 145.

50 *A Tree of Jesse Carved upon an Ivory Comb*, Bavaria, *c*. 1200. Louvre Museum Paris. *Wikimedia, Tree of Jesse Louvre OA10428*.

51 *Tree of Jesse Illustration from the Scherenberg Psalter*, *c*. 1260. *Wikimedia, Cod St Peter perg 139 Scherenberg Psalter 7v*.

52 *Holy Bible*, Jeremiah, Chapter 31, and Metzger, Bruce M. and Coogan, Michael D., eds., *The Oxford Guide to Ideas and Issues of the Bible* (Oxford University Press, 2001), 66.

53 London: British Museum, *MS Lansdowne, 383, Psalter*, fol. 15r; reproduced in Watson, *Early Iconography*, Plate XVIII.

54 *Holy Bible*, Matthew, Chapter 1: 1–17.

Latin inscription translated as, 'And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed'.[55] The scroll held by Moses reads, 'The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken'.[56] Readers of the Lansdowne Psalter would have understood the presence of Abraham and Moses as representing the Old Order which was to give place to the New; they knew that Moses received the Old Law, the Ten Commandments, on a holy mountain and Jesus proclaimed the New Law, the Beatitudes, in the Sermon on the Mount. In Tim Ayers's view it is more than possible that the oft illustrated relationship between the Old and New Testaments was one reason for the popularity of Trees of Jesse.[57]

There is evidence that by at least the early thirteenth century Trees of Jesse had begun to be sculpted in Wales. At Llantwit Major, close to the Glamorgan coast, a church was founded in the early sixth century by Illtud, the founder of an internationally famous school. Here an early thirteenth-century stone Tree of Jesse is carved so that it frames a niche (Fig. 2). Jesse lies at the base of the niche on a small ledge, his head resting upon his right elbow. The tree rises from his groin, divides into two and, bearing the heads of Christ's ancestors, which peep through the foliage, curls up towards the head of Christ at the apex. The niche now holds a simple modern crucifix, but it is likely that, as an altar piece, it once held the sculpted figures of the Madonna and Christ Child.[58] Similarly, at St David's Cathedral in Pembrokeshire, most of the structure of which dates from the twelfth century, a stone Tree of Jesse is used to frame the south-west door to the nave. The door now has a protective porch but until the nineteenth century was open to the elements. Consequently it is extremely difficult to discern the weathered figures carved upon it, although David with his harp may still be identified. W. B. Jones and E. A. Freeman thought that the western side of the Tree rose from the figure of Adam, 'with Eve issuing from his side', whereas the eastern side supported, 'the recumbent figure of Jesse, from whom springs the branch, along which the figures are introduced'.[59] Lord, though, discerns two Jesse figures one on either side of the door.[60] Roger Stalley, an authority on medieval architecture, is undecided: 'There are reclining figures at both sides but it is not immediately obvious which is Jesse', he comments. He goes on to describe the iconography of the Tree at St David's Cathedral, which includes a crucifixion and seated evangelists, as 'far from conventional',[61] an observation that possibly reflects a lack of awareness of how varied interpretations of the Tree of Jesse could be. For example, the Crucifixion is featured centrally on the Tree of Jesse which dominates the east window of the choir at Wells Cathedral. The window has Christ at its centre, at the Incarnation, the Crucifixion and at the Day of Judgement and through its inscription draws upon both the Old and New Testaments, exemplifying the flexibility of the Tree as a means of communication and its ability to meet a variety of devotional needs.[62]

In the early fourteenth century, Christ's humanity and physical presence in the Eucharist were much debated, leading to a growing emphasis on Christ's bodily sacrifice and the establishment of

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55 *Ibid*., Genesis, Chapter 22: 18, and Watson, *Early Iconography of the Tree of Jesse*, 104.

56 *Ibid*., Deuteronomy, Chapter 18:15, and Watson, *Early Iconography of the Tree of Jesse*, 104.

57 Ayers, Tim, *The Medieval Stained Glass of Wells Cathedral*, Part 1 (Oxford University Press for the British Academy, 2004), 314.

58 Kelly, Vivian, *St Illtud's Church, Llantwit Major* (St Illtud's Church, Llantwit Major, 1993), 18.

59 Jones, W. B. and Freeman, E. A., *History and Antiquities of St David's Cathedral* (Parker, J. H. and Parker, J. *et al*, London, 1856), 55.

60 Lord, *Medieval Vision*, 206.

61 Stalley, Roger, 'The Cathedral', in Lloyd, Thomas, Orbach, Julian and Scourfield, Robert, *The Buildings of Wales: Pembrokeshire* (Yale University Press, 2004), 405.

62 Ayers, *The Medieval Stained Glass of Wells Cathedral*, Part 1, 305 and 309.

Fig. 2: A stone Tree of Jesse at St Illtud's Church, Llantwit Major. Early 13th century, height 2.48m. *Photograph: The author.*

the feast of Corpus Christi. Concurrently (*c*. 1340), at Dorchester Abbey in Oxfordshire, as if to stress Christ's humanity, a magnificent Jesse Tree window, which features tracery, sculpture and stained glass, was created in the Sanctuary. The stone figures of the Virgin and Child and Christ in Majesty were destroyed by Cromwellian soldiers during the Commonwealth. Jesse, though, positioned at altar height, was left sleeping (Fig. 3). A smaller figure than that at Abergavenny, he bears a massive vine which rises to the full height of the building. The surviving stone figures are complemented by the window's many painted figures, some of which also suffered at Cromwellian hands and have been restored. All the figures interpret the prophecy of Isaiah and illustrate the genealogy of Christ. Similarly, at Christchurch Priory, Dorset, the Great Quire is dominated by a stone Jesse

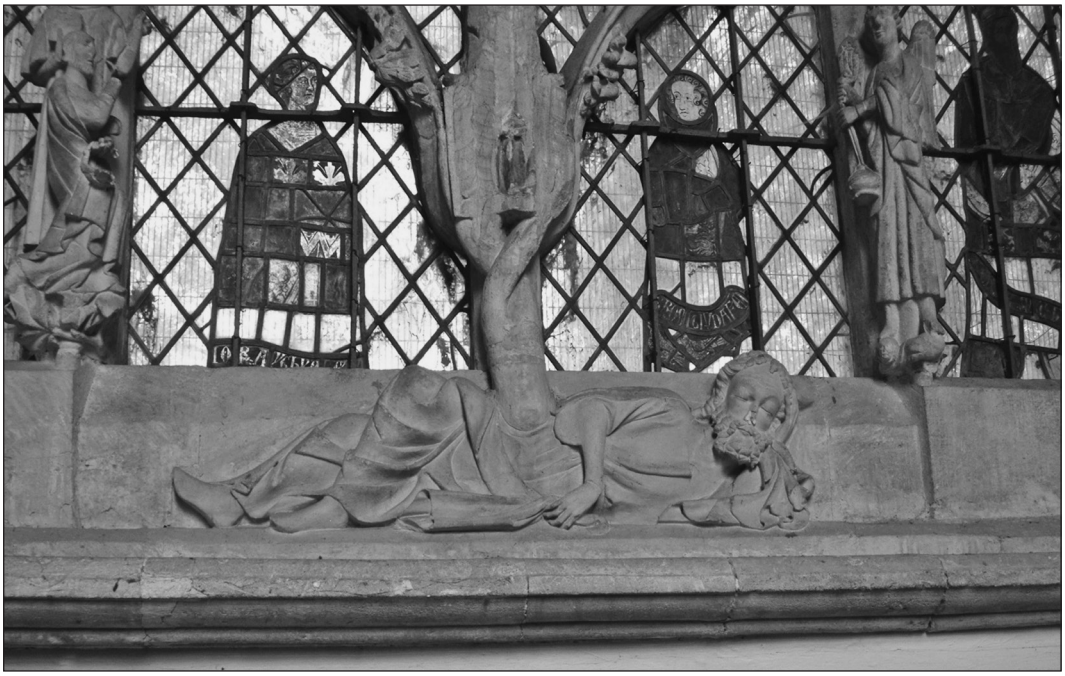

Fig. 3: A stone Jesse Figure at Dorchester Abbey, Oxfordshire. *Circa* 1340, length *c*. 2.4m. *Photograph: The author.*

reredos carved between 1330 and 1360. Many empty niches indicate the losses suffered at the hands of iconoclasts but allow one to appreciate that the complete tree must have been magnificent. A crowned, cross-legged Jesse, again at altar height, flanked by the figures of David and Solomon, survives, together with a delightful and detailed Nativity scene, another example of the great variety of images that could be incorporated into the scheme of the Tree of Jesse.

The late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries saw the production of a number of Trees of Jesse in stained glass in Denbighshire. Three may still be seen at All Saints Church, Gresford, the church of St Bridget, at Diserth, and the church of St Dyfnog in Llanrhaeadr, near Denbigh. The fifteenth-century stained glass windows in the Lady Chapel at All Saints Church, Gresford, a fine parish church, are of particular interest in that they portray in some detail the apocryphal Life of the Virgin.[63] The great east window features a Tree of Jesse, heavily restored in the Victorian era, on its upper tracery. Jesse's merchant's cap, of the same fashion as that of Abergavenny's Jesse, has a gold-coloured medallion at its centre-front, perhaps a clue to what might have filled the empty indentation on the cap at Abergavenny. He sleeps with his head resting upon his right hand and a vine rises from his ribs.[64] From the thirteenth century, the Tree of Jesse was often depicted as a grape-bearing vine, making a clear visual connection between the sacrificial blood shed by Christ on the Cross and the wine taken at Holy Communion.

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[63] Gray, *Images of Piety*, 8–14.

[64] Crampin, Martin, *Stained Glass from Welsh Churches* (Y Lolfa, Talybont, Ceredigion, 2014), Figures 97–8.

The considerably damaged, five-light Tree of Jesse window at Diserth, *c*. 1533, no longer contains a figure of Jesse. It and other figures that were at the foot of the window have disappeared and been replaced with glass fragments though the central figure of Mary, holding the Christ Child in her arms, remains.[65] At almost the same time, in the same region, a Tree of Jesse window was created in the church of St Dyfnog in Llanrhaeadr, near Denbigh. It is largely intact and offers a strong notion of how St Mary's Jesse Tree might have looked were it complete.[66] It has been described as, 'one of the best preserved minor examples of late Gothic stained glass in England and Wales'.[67] Easier to hide than Abergavenny's great wooden sculpture, the window bears the marks of having been removed and buried in order to keep it out of the hands of Parliamentary forces during the Civil War of 1642–46, and re-erected with some inconsistencies in 1661.[68] The window has twenty-three identifiable figures taken from Matthew's genealogy, prophets and kings whose presence made visual connections between the Old and New Testaments. The prophets appear as foretellers of Christ's life and death and the kings speak of Christ's royal status in addition to his humanity. Jesse, in green robe and dark red mantle lined with gold brocade, reclines at the base of the window. He is flanked by Moses and Sadoc, the priest. Above Jesse is his son, King David, who has Solomon, his son, on his right and Rehoboam, his grandson, on his left. The figures, clothed in red, green, silver and gold, are depicted at full length in the central light and half length in side lights. The Madonna and Child, set within a glowing mandorla, have the place of honour at the top of the central light. Immediately above Mary is an image of a pelican standing on the edge of a nest feeding her four chicks with blood from her wounded breast.[69] Gray relates this image to, 'numerous examples of mystical imagery from Bernard of Clairvaux onwards which describes Christ as feeding the soul with milk from his breasts as well as with blood'.[70] In the Middle Ages it was believed that the pelican fed its chicks with its own blood. Consequently, the imagery of the bleeding pelican, sacrificing her own blood to feed her young would have been understood by fifteenth-century worshippers as a reference to both Christ's sacrifice on the cross and the taking of wine at Holy Communion.

Wherever the Tree of Jesse image appeared, the complete Tree would have carried the narrative of Christ's lineage with an emphasis on his earthly family, making the Christological point that he was both human and divine.[71]

The Role of Visual Imagery in Religious Teaching

Nearly all early Christians were agreed that there should be no graven image in the house of God, 'For as much then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device'.[72] Nevertheless, the Christian church understood the value of the image as a means of communication. Pope Gregory the Great, who lived at the end of the sixth century AD, was one of the first to insist that paintings could be useful to the church because they helped to remind the congregation of the teachings they had received and kept the memory of

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65 Crampin, *Stained Glass*, Figure 101.
66 *Ibid*., Figure 99.
67 Rackham, Bernard and Baty, C. W., 'The Jesse Window at Llanrhaiadr, Denbighshire – 1', *Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs*, Vol, 80, No. 468 (Mar., 1942), 62.
68 Matthews, *The Llanrhaeadr Jesse Window*, 12.
69 Crampin, *Stained Glass*, Figure 100.
70 Gray, *Images of Piety*, 47–8.
71 Gray, *Images of Piety*, 13.
72 *Holy Bible*, Acts, Chapter 17: 29.

that teaching alive. In a letter to Bishop Serenus of Marseilles, a known iconoclast, he argued that thought must be given to the many members of the church who could not read or write. Gregory wrote twice to Serenus urging him to allow images in his church, 'for the edification of ignorant people, so that those ignorant of letters who gazed at a story might learn what has been said'.[73] Celia Chazelle stresses, though, that Gregory believed no individual could understand the subject matter of an artwork without guidance on the subject from those who were more learned.[74] What a painting could do, and it seems that Gregory only had in mind large wall paintings which could be shared with groups of people, was remind viewers of knowledge already held and, possibly, extend it.

Six hundred years later the value of visual imagery as a means of teaching was still being argued. The twelfth-century Benedictine monk, the teacher Peregrinus, author of *Speculum Virginum*, believed that engaging someone in looking at an illustrated manuscript would be particularly useful if his reader should, 'find among her companions any who did not understand what they read, since to those who were unlettered the picture was a kind of writing'.[75] At this period the common approach to teaching an individual to read was for the learner to hear the text read aloud while looking at the lettering and examining the images on the pages. This approach was often supported by recitation of the text until it was committed to memory.[76] There is no mention in Peregrinus's essay of women as writers. In the medieval period more women could read than could write, and this was, of course, also true of men. Most of the women who were able to read *and* write lived within an ecclesiastical context.[77]

Sculpture began to appear on Romanesque, or Norman, churches between 1000 and 1200 AD. St Bernard of Clairvaux, a twelfth-century leader of the Cistercian Order, complained about the irreligious character of much Romanesque sculpture. He might have been thinking of the Romanesque church of St Mary and St David at Kilpeck close to Abergavenny where a mixture of Celtic, Anglo-Saxon, Scandinavian and French Romanesque sculptural forms are all in evidence. Built by Hugh de Kilpeck, son of William fitz Norman, *c*. 1140, eighty-five corbel sculptures survive; the meaning of most is obscure, but it is likely that some have been taken from a bestiary, a genre of picture book which, through real and imagined animals, introduced the laity to nature and myth. The sculptures at Kilpeck include an exhibitionist Sheela na Gig, possibly a Celtic fertility symbol or, perhaps, a warning to parishioners of the sins of the flesh. Further warnings can be seen in the number of corbels that feature men being eaten by beasts, understood as men being consumed by sin. The powerful symbols of birth, life and death flourish here and continue to hold considerable fascination. It is a reasonable assumption that Kilpeck's sculptures like all Trees of Jesse had a didactic purpose. Ayers considers that the flexible form of the Jesse Tree advantaged it as an aid to memory and cites it as one of several diagrammatic forms that were being explored by the church as teaching aids in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.[78]

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[73] Chaxelle, C. M., 'Pictures, Books and the Illiterate: Pope Gregory 1's Letters to Serenus of Marseilles', *Word and Image*, Vol. 6, Issue 2 (1990), 140.

[74] *Ibid*., 138.

[75] Watson, Arthur, 'The Speculum Virginum with Special Reference to the Tree of Jesse', *Speculum*, Vol. 3, No. 4 (Oct., 1928), 456.

[76] Clanchy, M. T., *From Memory to Written Record: England 1066–1307*, first pub. 1979 (Wiley-Blackwell, Chichester, 2013), 196.

[77] Skinner, Patricia and Van Houts, Elizabeth, eds. *Medieval Writings on Secular Women* (Penguin Books, London, 2011), xxvii.

[78] Ayers, *The Medieval Stained Glass of Wells Cathedral*, Part 1, 302.

When Abergavenny's Tree of Jesse was completed at the end of the fifteenth century how might parishioners have been introduced to the narrative it represented? Clanchy describes the typical village priest as, 'relatively poor and uneducated, [he] could not have instructed many children at a time, nor have got them much beyond the ABC and the bare elements of reading Latin'.[79] Such an individual was not likely to have demonstrated an extensive range of didactic skills. The celebrated art historian Erwin Panofsky opined that it was necessary to be competent in three successively more demanding areas in order to find full meaning in the visual arts. One would need to identify primary or natural subject matter, such as representations of human beings or animals; connect artistic motifs and combinations of artistic motifs, such as recognising that a group of male figures seated at a supper table in certain poses represent the Last Supper; and be aware of intrinsic meaning and content, which, when looking at a Tree of Jesse would involve an understanding of the complex theological information that could be read into the artwork.[80] For example, through its artwork and inscription a mid-thirteenth-century Jesse window at Le Mans clearly portrays the Incarnation and Christ's physical genealogy. The inscription reads, '*Sic deus ex Iesse cepit carnaliter esse*'.[81] 'Thus God from the stem of Jesse began to become flesh'. Here, text and image both have a role to play in developing understanding, informing those who were able to read and comprehend the Latin inscription of Christ's humanity, and reminding those who were only able to gaze upon and absorb details of the figures on the Tree of the part each individual played in the life of Christ. Even for those who could read the text, concentrated attention upon the visual image could consolidate understanding.

When Christ's family tree was graphically portrayed on a large scale as at Abergavenny and Le Mans, groups of people might have been introduced to its Christological message by learned clerics. Small scale illustrations such as in illuminated manuscripts might also have been used for teaching purposes as well as enriching individual reflection. A text such as *Capucins' Bible*, *c*. 1180,[82] for example, contains intricate illustrations; one shows a Tree of Jesse forming the L of *Liber*, the book, 'The book of the generations of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham', the words which begin the Gospel of Matthew, making clear that Jesus is of God's chosen people, by his descent from Abraham, and a 'shoot of Jesse' by his descent from Jesse's son, King David. Each of the figures on the stem holds a scroll inscribed with testimony that could have been shared and explored by teacher and student. The upper branches encircle Christ and seven doves symbolizing the Gifts of the Holy Spirit. This is a complex image possibly requiring shared interpretation, as does the personification of Synagogue, who, at the summit of the illustration, surrenders her crown to the Church. A viewer who knew nothing of the religious histories of Christianity and Judaism would not be able to interpret either figure. But, as art historian Ernst Gombrich points out, 'if the image alone could not tell the worshipper a story he had never heard of, it was admirably suited to remind him of stories he had been told in sermons or lessons.'[83]

Panofsky's analysis of skills was, in part, echoed in 1992 by William Diebold, who also used a tripartite schema to describe the kinds of literacy skills, visual, verbal and cultural, which would

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79 Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record*, 244.

80 Panofsky, Erwin, *Meaning in the Visual Arts* (Peregrine Books, Harmondsworth, 1955), 53–5.

81 Ayers, *The Medieval Stained Glass of Wells Cathedral*, Part 1, 314.

82 *Capucins' Bible*, *c*. 1180, Bibliothèque National de France, Ms. Lat. 16746, fol.7v. Reproduced in Cahn, Walter, *Romanesque Bible Illumination* (Cornell University Press, Ithaca, New York, 1982) Plate 179.

83 Gombrich, E. H., *The Image and The Eye* (Phaedon Press, Oxford, 1982), 155.

be necessary to allow a reader to interpret much religious iconography.[84] How might these skills be applied to analysis of a Tree of Jesse illustrated at the opening of the book of Isaiah in the twelfth-century *Lambeth Bible*? This image is interesting for a number of reasons including its clear assimilation of Byzantine features into English art seen in the way robes are folded and draped around the figures which rise from Jesse, recumbent here as he is most often portrayed, at the base of the Tree. His head rests upon his left hand while his right hand, forming an expressive swirl in his splendid red cloak, holds the substantial stem of the Tree.[85] He would have been recognised by those who had previously been introduced to his most usual position, along with the branches and figures springing from him, the symbols which identify him. The comparative efficiency with which symbols can be learned and recalled is surprising, advises Gombrich, 'thanks to their economy of elements, symbols are much more amenable to storage … and recalled with relative ease.'[86] The conventions drawn upon by image makers when representing holy figures were of significant help to all viewers but were, perhaps, of most value to the illiterate for whom they turned art into script.[87] In the *Lambeth Bible*, the Virgin spreads her arms wide in an expressive, almost explanatory gesture. She touches with her right hand a medallion enclosing the crowned female figure of *Ecclesia*, the Church, and with her left touches another within which stands the downcast figure of *Synagoga*, Synagogue. Mary would seem, then, to be portrayed as a link between the Old and New Testaments. Both *Ecclesia* and *Synagoga* are flanked by two bearded, male figures. Those accompanying *Ecclesia* appear, by their hand gestures, to be encouraging her whereas the gestures of *Synagoga's* companions could be interpreted as comforting her. From an upper, small medallion outside the main illumination, the hand of God appears and draws the veil from *Synagoga's* eyes; culturally literate viewers would understand by this gesture that God is enabling her to see the truth more clearly. Simple identification of the figures of *Ecclesia* and *Synagoga* would require a high degree of religious and cultural knowledge, possibly helped by their oppositional positions and the presence or lack of symbolic attributes: *Ecclesia* is crowned and in her right hand holds a barely discernible staff with a cross at its top, whereas *Synagoga* has no crown or staff and, as has already been noted, is having the truth-obscuring veil lifted from her eyes. Unusually, each of two further medallions in the *Lambeth Bible* illustration contains two female figures, one pair hold hands while the second pair embrace. Eric Millar explains the figures as representing a verse from the Psalms: 'Mercy and truth are met together: righteousness and peace have kissed each other'.[88] Watson, while noting this as the only instance he knows of the integration of these virtues into a Tree of Jesse, describes their illustrated harmony as being pertinent to the subject of the Tree, 'Inasmuch as they united the old order with the new which brought salvation'.[89] It is impossible to know if Millar's interpretation is accurate. It seems a reasonable response to a visually literate viewer, but whether it matches that of the image maker cannot be known. Such setting into context although problematic for contemporary viewers, would not have been difficult for those culturally literate members of medieval and early

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84 Diebold, William J., 'Verbal, visual, and cultural literacy in medieval art: word and image in the Psalter of Charles the Bold', *Word and Image*, Vol. 8, No. 2. April–June 1992, 95.

85 *Tree of Jesse, Lambeth Bible* (Lambeth Palace Library, Ms. 3, fol. 198. Reproduced in Cahn, *Romanesque Bible Illumination*, Plate 151.

86 Gombrich, *The Image and the Eye*, 16.

87 *Ibid*., 88.

88 Millar, Eric G., 'Les principaux manuscripts à peintures du Lambeth Palace a Londres', *Bulletin de la Société française de reproductions de manuscripts à peintures* (Paris, 1924), 25, quoted in Watson, *Early Iconography*, 100.

89 Watson, *Early Iconography*, 100.

modern society who were trained in interpretation of religious images and familiar with situational clues.[90]

When one visualises the individuals engrossed in material such as the *Lambeth Bible*, it is those who are equipped with Diebold's visual and verbal literacy and religious, or cultural, knowledge that one thinks of. Moreover, it is likely that they would have been privileged, possibly noble. Clanchy, however, argues that by the fourteenth century most church-going people in England were able to support the ability to interpret visual imagery with some understanding of Latin.[91] What was true of congregations in England was also likely to be true of at least some in Wales. The majority of men and women of early modern Abergavenny would not have been able to read Latin but they could use the imagery of stained glass windows or sculptures as an *aide-memoire* to remind them of Latin texts they had previously heard read aloud and, perhaps, even learned by heart. Every medieval priest was required to teach at least the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments.[92] It is highly likely also that frequent repetition of the liturgy associated with the rite of mass, which parishioners were expected to attend on Sundays and holy days would, over time, have become familiar to all and comprehensible to some.

Gutenburg's invention of printing brought about great changes to the availability of both religious texts and illustrations. One of the earliest books printed *c*. 1460 was a woodcut version of the *Biblia Pauperum*, not a Bible and not intended for the poor, but a combination of text and illustration which was immediately popular.[93] Woodcut illustrations of Biblical events began to circulate across Europe, one example crossing the English Channel and reaching the artist who created Llanrhaeadr's Jesse window, for the posture and detail of the Madonna and Child in the window closely matches the same figures in a Parisian woodcut of 1498.[94] Books of Hours were no longer the preserve of the rich or noble, 'On the eve of the Reformation', says Duffy, 'there were probably over 50,000 Books of Hours or Primers in circulation among the English laity'.[95] It is likely that some of this material found its way to towns such as Abergavenny, so close to the border with England: 'all the indications are that literacy was spreading among lay men and women; landowners, lawyers, merchants and traders were learning to read in increasing numbers'.[96] Very few Books of Hours in English, Latin or Welsh have survived to the present in Wales, although Ceridwen Lloyd-Morgan refers to a poem, written by Hywel Dafi of Gwent (active 1450–1480) which describes a richly-dressed girl kneeling before an image of Mary contained in what was probably an illuminated Book of Hours. Lloyd-Morgan also notes that the poet is from the comparatively prosperous southern March of Wales, 'where one might expect ownership of books to be more common'.[97] With reference to the paucity of evidence of the Welsh, particularly Welsh-speaking women, as readers, she reminds us of the oral traditions of Welsh poets and notes with some emphasis that literature could be preserved without being collected in books.[98] Gray,

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90 Henry, Avril, *Biblia Pauperum: a facsimile and edition* (Scolar Press, Aldershot, 1987), 18.
91 Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record*, 240.
92 Williams, *The Welsh Church*, 337.
93 Henry, *Biblia Pauperum*, 4.
94 Pigouchet, Jean, *Figure of Jesse*, Woodcut, Paris, 1498, reprinted in Lord, *The Visual Culture of Wales: Medieval Vision*, 205.
95 Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, 7.
96 Williams, *Renewal and Reformation*, 144.
97 Lloyd-Morgan, Ceridwen, 'Welsh women and the written word', in Pryce, Huw (ed.) *Literacy in Medieval Celtic Societies* (Cambridge University Press, 1998), 159.
98 *Ibid*., 163.

though, notes the number of books that feature in Welsh devotional imagery, an indication of their importance to both the makers and the viewers of the image. She points to the late fifteenth-century Lady Chapel window at Gresford, where St Anne is seen praying in her garden with a book in her lap, a window at Llandyrnog in Denbighshire in which the Virgin holds an open book at the Annunciation, and depictions of St Anne teaching the Virgin to read on the canopy of honour at Llaneilian-yn-Rhos, Denbighshire, and at Tremeirchion in Flintshire.[99]

The original sculpted Tree of Jesse at Abergavenny and those at Dorchester and Christchurch were large works, expensive and important and meant to be viewed attentively. The same is true of the many Jesse Tree windows created in England and Wales in the medieval and early modern period. All could be used to teach *groups* of people, possibly whole congregations, about Christ's earthly family and the words of the prophets who foretold his coming. At the very least, most people would have been able to recognise the individual figures on the Trees by their attributes. For example, the figure of David, son of Jesse, who features largely in the window at Llanrhaeadr would have been identified by the harp he carried. Moses, lawgiver and patriarch also has a place in this window, although he does not appear in either Matthew's or Luke's genealogies of Jesus. Moses represents the Law; he would have been recognised by the tablets he holds upon which the Ten Commandments were written. Moses' presence was furthermore a reminder that Christ, too, was a law giver, as was made clear in the Sermon on the Mount: 'Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy but to fulfil'.[100] And King Solomon, son of David and Bathsheba, builder of the great temple in Jerusalem, the antecedent of the Christian church, is shown here, as he often is, holding a model church.

In the Llanrhaeadr window the eye is drawn to the figure of David, which seems to emphasise the regal ancestry of Christ, intimating, perhaps, that the figures from the House of David are there to draw specific attention to Christ as Messiah *and* King. The genealogy is that of Christ's earthly father Joseph as told in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, but while many of the kings in this window *are* of Joseph's line, Joseph is not depicted. This seems likely to have been a common omission, for with the passage of time it began to be thought that the lineage portrayed was that of Mary, not Joseph.[101] Octavius Morgan points out that the commentary attached to a 1498 woodcut of the Jesse Tree in the *Iconographie Chrétienne* speaks of the 'Iconographic history of the Virgin Mary' which would be incomplete, 'if we did not speak here of the Tree of Jesse, which is met with so often at the close of the XII century'.[102] As adoration of the Virgin, long practised in Wales, became more widespread in the fifteenth century, what was taught about the Holy Family also changed. This is clearly exemplified in the upper section of a Jacques de Besançon miniature of the late fifteenth century which depicts Mary and the Christ Child surrounded by more than forty kings and prophets.[103] The branch that, in this interpretation, appears to rise from Jesse's back ends in a flower upon which Mary stands with Jesus in her arms. The last figures on the branch before the depiction of Mary are an aged couple, portrayed embracing; the birth and childhood of Mary feature on the lower half of the miniature and so it is reasonable to identify the figures as Mary's mythical parents, Anne and Joachim. Both feature prominently in stained glass at All Saints Church, Gresford, and

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99 Gray, *Images of Piety*, 19–20, 62 and Plates 12a and 33a.

100 *Holy Bible*, Matthew, Chapter 5: 17, and Matthews, *Llanrhaeadr Jesse Window*, 5.

101 Gray, *Images of Piety*, 13.

102 Morgan, *Ancient Monuments in the Priory Church, Abergavenny*, 85.

103 *Jacques de Besançon Miniature*, late 15th Century, Bibliothèque National de France. Wikimedia Bnf Ms Francais 245, fol. 84 Arbre de Jesse.

were once part of a much venerated image of the Holy Family sited in St David's Cathedral and destroyed at the Reformation.[104]

By the fifteenth century a growing demand for formal education became evident in England and, according to Williams, to a lesser degree in Wales. Williams believes that most Welsh people did not have the time, opportunity or inclination to pursue any formal learning that was not tied to the skills demanded by their need to earn a living, but since trade was vital to the life of towns such as Abergavenny many fifteenth-century traders and merchants would have been eager to develop literacy skills and would have sought teaching wherever they could find it, most probably from a sympathetic clergyman or a family priest or chaplain.[105] However it is highly likely that those lower down the social scale continued to receive their religious education from the church and from such visual images as the Jesse Tree.

There is no visual or verbal record that would allow a full and accurate description of Abergavenny's Tree of Jesse and so tell us of its particular characteristics and what parishioners might have learned from it, but from the late medieval and early modern examples described above we can be fairly confident that the meaning of the Abergavenny Jesse Tree would have closely resembled that carried in the Llanrhaeadr window, where the main lights tell us that Jesus is the Messiah, a King, Lawgiver and Priest both human and divine. Moreover, the four prophets who can just be seen in the tracery lights, Isaiah and Zechariah above the first and second lights and Obadiah and Joel above the fourth and fifth, are there to confirm that Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies. Isaiah, as we have said, gave artists the concept and iconology of the Tree of Jesse, Zechariah wrote of the Messiah saying, 'Behold the man whose name is THE BRANCH'.[106] Obadiah had a vision that, 'Upon Mount Zion shall be deliverance'.[107] And the Lord, through Joel, promised, 'I will pour out my spirit upon *all* flesh'.[108] The words of Obadiah and Joel are there to tell Christians that the Messiah would be from Zion, therefore a Jew, but would bring deliverance to all people, Jew and Gentile alike.[109] This was the central message of the Tree of Jesse, that the Old Testament prophecies had been fulfilled and that a Messiah, both human and divine, had been born of the royal House of David who would bring salvation to all people. The more one examines images such as this the clearer it becomes that every part of the window has its own biblical story to tell and be explained. The role of the church and its priests continued, therefore, to be of great educational significance in the fifteenth century for, although there was what Williams describes as 'a renewed demand' for religious literature at that time, 'to meet the needs of the growing number of lay men and women who were deeply concerned about matters of faith and belief',[110] the spoken word and visual images continued to be the primary means by which religious knowledge and faith were developed in the general population.

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104 Gray, *Images of Piety*, 20.
105 Williams, *Renewal and Reformation*, 143–4.
106 *Holy Bible*, Zechariah, Chapter 6: 12.
107 *Ibid*., Obadiah, verse 17.
108 *Ibid*., Joel, Chapter 2: 28.
109 Matthews, *Llanrhaeadr Jesse Window*, 7–8.
110 Williams, *Renewal and Reformation*, 127.

REMEMBERING THE MONMOUTHSHIRES

By Peter Strong

'Let those who come after see to it that these names are not forgotten.'

From the order of service of dedication of the memorial to the fallen of the 1st Battalion, Monmouthshire Regiment (Territorial Force), 7 May 1921.

On Sunday 9 May 1915, more than 350 officers and men from the 3rd line, 1st Battalion, Monmouthshire Regiment – men who were still in Newport awaiting their turn to be posted to training camps elsewhere in Britain prior to joining the front line members of battalion in Flanders – marched from the Drill Hall in Stow Hill through Newport to St John's Church Maindee, the battalion church, for a service in remembrance of those comrades who had already fallen in the Great War. The battalion had only been in Flanders since February but had already suffered 51 fatalities, 39 of them in the previous fortnight. The church was 'overflowing' and many members of the public were unable to get in to hear a 'stirring address' given by the Vicar, the Rev. D.E. Llewellin Jones, chaplain to the battalion.[1]

What the congregation did not know, however, was that the number of casualties had suddenly increased greatly. News had not yet reached Monmouthshire that on the previous day, Saturday 8 May, the '1st Mons' had been decimated.

On that day the 1st Monmouthshires were in the front line near Frezenberg, to the east of Ypres. The 2nd Battle of Ypres, a series of German attacks aimed at capturing Ypres and opening the way to the Channel ports, had been raging since 22 April. Early in the morning on 8 May the battalion came under heavy attack from a 2–3 hour artillery bombardment followed by wave after wave of infantry. In spite of having very little artillery support and being massively outnumbered, the men held on and severe fighting continued throughout the morning. Eventually the battalion to the right was forced to retreat leaving the 1st Mons in danger of being surrounded and cut off. The Commanding Officer, Colonel Charles Robinson, rallied his men with the call 'Stick it Mons' and began to organise a fighting withdrawal but was shot and killed. By late afternoon the survivors had managed to withdraw to a reserve trench. They had been forced to give ground but their tenacity had ensured that the line did not break.

A total of 139 officers and men of the battalion were killed on 8 May. Another 22 died of wounds, mainly in German hospitals, over the following weeks. Meanwhile, a mile to the south of the 1st Mons, the 3rd Mons had suffered similar casualties, being left with just four officers and 130 men.[2]

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1 *South Wales Weekly Argus* (*SWWA*), 15 May 1915. For a detailed history of the 1st Monmouthshires during World War One, see Hughes, L. and Dixon J., *Surrender Be Damned: A History of the 1/1st Battalion the Monmouthshire Regiment 1914–18* (Cwm, 1995). Casualty figures are based on Hughes and Dixon, 164–201.

2 *Ibid*., 164–201. For the 3rd Mons see Dixon, J. and J., *With Rifle and Pick* (Cwm, 1991). Later reports seem somewhat confused over the number of 1st Mons casualties on 8 May. The *South Wales Weekly Argus*'s account of the unveiling of the memorial at Frezenberg says the 1st Mons 'lost seven officers and 434 other ranks' on this spot (27 May 1931). This seems to be due to confusion between those who were killed and those who were wounded and/or taken prisoner. On 11 May 1935 it claimed the battalion 'lost 27 officers and 346 other ranks killed' on the day. These were figures that had been previously used by the *Weekly Argus* (16 August 1919) for 1st Mons deaths for the whole of the war.

The 8th of May effectively ended the 1st Mons' existence as a separate 'rifle' battalion. On 27 May the remnants of the battalion were amalgamated with the 2nd and 3rd Mons to form a single Monmouthshire battalion. The 1st Battalion was reconstituted in August but as a Pioneer battalion, tasked with the heavy work of building roads, railways, billets and trenches. Although the battalion was to suffer many more casualties before the war ended, notably at Loos in October 1915, on the Somme in July 1916 and on the Canal du Nord in October 1918, 8 May was to remain the most costly day in its history.

As a territorial battalion, the 1st Monmouthshires were deeply embedded in their local communities. The men, recruited mainly from Newport, Chepstow, the Severnside villages, Blackwood, Rhymney and Aberbargoed, had been cheered through the streets and at the railway stations when they left for war on 5 August 1914. The losses of 8 May therefore hit local communities hard. The process of remembrance was consequently particularly intense and the 1st Mons was to become one of the most memorialised units of the Great War.

Over the years that followed the battalion's losses were commemorated in numerous ways, both at home and abroad, including memorial plaques and monuments, newspaper advertisements and articles, paintings and ceremonies. The process continues today. This article seeks to trace this process by examining various types of memorial and to demonstrate how, for many years, 8 May became a day of remembrance in Monmouthshire, rivalling 11 November in significance. A number of historians have shown that the process of commemoration was not neutral, but 'became part of a wider debate on social, political and national identity in the post-war years.'[3] It will be seen that this was true of battalion memorials to the 1st Monmouthshires, albeit not to the extent that was often the case in relation to local memorials.

May 1916, the first anniversary of the Battle of Frezenberg Ridge, can be seen as marking the beginning of this commemoration process. Already, only a year after the event, 8 May was firmly established as a day of remembrance. Those serving with the battalion on the Western Front, at that time preparing for the Battle of the Somme, held a dinner and concert in a large barn on 10 May in remembrance of their fallen comrades and in tribute to the survivors of the day, the latter being guests of honour.[4] The *South Wales Argus* marked the anniversary by publishing an eye-witness account of the battle from Rifleman H.E. Williams of Fields Park Road, Newport, adding a comment of its own:

> CAN GWENT FORGET? There are today a few of the old battalion left, and our thoughts go out to the hundreds who today are peacefully sleeping in the shattered fields of Ypres. Is it too much to ask that Monmouthshire should remember the heroes who are fighting that we may enjoy the blessings of a lasting freedom?

The *Argus* answered the question in the negative:

> Monmouthshire can never forget the 8th of May 1915. It was a day of disaster, but it was a day of glory, the tale of which was written in the blood of heroes.

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3 Gaffney, Angela, *Aftermath: Remembering the Great War in Wales* (Cardiff, 1998), 174. See also Mason, L., ' "Is it nothing to you, all ye who pass by?" – Commemorating the Great War in Ammanford 1920–1937', in *Llafur*, Vol. 11, No. 1 (Dec 2012), 49–62.

4 MacDonald, A., *A Lack of Offensive Spirit? The 46th (North Midland) Division at Gommecourt, 1st July 1916* (Eastbourne 2008), 81.

The same issue contained a whole series of 'In Memorium' notices placed by the families of men who had died on 8 May 1915 and a poem by its own regular poet 'Dyfrig':

> Strike the triple harp of Gwalia
> To the theme of Monmouth's sons;
> Robe old Gwent in fame's regalia
> Hear the rally: 'Stick it, Mons!'
>
> On the blood-red fields of 'Wipers'
> Lo! The Hunnish hordes advance,
> Massed battalions, hidden snipers,
> Aiming at the heart of France.
>
> Heralded by shells and gasses
> Liquid fire and poison breath
> On they came in serried masses
> Like an avalanche of death.
>
> Through the tumult and the slaughter
> Through the thunder of the guns,
> Though the blood ran out like water,
> Rose the rally; 'Stick it Mons!'
>
> Did they stick it? These shall witness–
> Just the few, the worn and spent,
> These who proved a noble fitness
> To be hailed the sons of Gwent.
>
> And when come the days of leisure–
> When we muffle up the guns,
> In our utmost heart we'll treasure
> Monmouth's rally; 'Stick it Mons!'
>
> Envoi
> The Colonel's call is sounding still
> From every heath-clad Monmouth hill,
> Peels up the glens and down the dales
> And through the heart of gallant Wales:
> 'Avenge your comrades, smite the Huns
> For home and freedom, stick it Mons.'[5]

These simple but effective verses are typical of much of the poetry printed during the Great War. As with the *Argus* editorial, they echo the government line, and indeed public opinion, in emphasising

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[5] *SWWA*, 13 May 1916. It is perhaps significant that the *Argus* article was headlined "The Eighth of May" with the double inverted commas in the original.

that the deaths were a necessary price of fighting for freedom and against German expansionism. In style and message they are far removed from the likes of Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon but were much more widely read.[6]

After the war many memorials were produced commemorating individual members of the battalion. Notable amongst these was the plaque unveiled in 1919 in the battalion church, St John the Evangelist, Maindee:

> In proud and loving memory of Lieut. Colonel Charles Lawson Robinson, V.D., Officer Commanding 1st Battalion, Monmouthshire Regiment, who was killed in action near Ypres, 8th May 1915. Greater love hath no man than this that a man lay down his life for his friends.[7]

In October 1921 a memorial reredos was dedicated in the same church to Edward Stone Phillips, another of the 1st Mons victims of 8 May, and his brother, Captain Leslie Phillips, 1st Battalion, Welch Regiment, who was killed on 25 April 1915. Also notable is the stained glass window at All Saints' Church, Llanfrechfa, featuring Major Edmund Styant Williams, also killed on 8 May 1915.[8]

While Remembrance Day was commemorated throughout Monmouthshire on 11 November as in the rest of the UK, local commemoration often focussed on 8 May. As the *Monmouthshire Evening Post* pointed out in 1921:

> Only a comparatively small number of Monmouthshire's 'glorious dead' actually fell in action on May 8, 1915, but incidents of local heroism on that day are so well known that we can make the anniversary of the deaths of the few symbolic of the deaths of the whole.[9]

The first physical memorials to the battalion as a whole were local. 'Shortly after' the war eight may trees were planted in Belle Vue Park, Newport to commemorate the events of 8th May 1915.[10]

The work for the official battalion memorial, which is situated in St Woolos Cathedral, Newport, was carried out by the battalion's Memorial Committee. This began life on 24 March 1919 when a group of five officers met at the Drill Hall in Newport at the instigation of Lt. Col. C. H. Smith and Lt. Col. C. A. Evill 'to discuss how the Battalion might be safeguarded until such time as the War Office announced a definite programme for the future of the Territorial Force and also to discuss whether the formation of an Old Comrades Society was possible.'[11] They decided to form a Provisional Committee 'to deal with any matters connected with the welfare of the Battalion, as they

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6 De Groot, G., *Back in Blighty: The British at Home in World War I* (London, 2014), 312–13.

7 *SWWA*, 16 August 1919.

8 *SWWA*, 8 October 1921. St John's Church was gutted by fire in 1949. For Major Williams, see Gwent Archives newsletter, Summer 2014 (http://www.gwentarchives.gov.uk).

9 *Monmouthshire Evening Post*, 9 May 1921. One might quarrel with the view that over 25 per cent of the battalion's total deaths on a single day amounted to 'only a comparably small number'.

10 *SWWA*, 10 May 1947. It has not been possible to discover the exact date of planting. The battalion's Memorial Committee minute book makes no reference to it (Minute Book of the War Memorial and Provisional Committee, 1st Battalion The Monmouthshire Regiment T.F. 1919–29: Gwent Archives, D766/55). There is no mention of it in the minutes of Newport Town Council's Parks and Cemeteries Committee (Minute Book of Newport Council Parks and Cemeteries Committee 1920–28: Gwent Archives, A110/M18/2). Nor does there appear to be any report in the *South Wales Argus*.

11 Minute Book of the War Memorial and provisional Committee, 1st Battalion The Monmouthshire Regiment T.F. 1919–29: Gwent Archives, D766/55. The other three officers were Captains M.C. Llewellin, W.M. Burnyeat and R.C.L. Thomas.

Fig. 1: St Woolos memorial panel 1. *Photograph: The author.*

Fig. 2: St Woolos memorial panel 2. *Photograph: The author.*

may arise.' A committee of sixteen officers was chosen (although it appears to have been selected or self-selected rather than elected).[12]

It was initially assumed that the natural place for a battalion war memorial would be the battalion church, St. John's, Maindee, and in May 1919 the committee met with the vicar to discuss his proposal to this effect. The minutes of the meeting recorded that:

> … it was decided that it did not appear desirable that the war memorial of the battalion should be placed in any church of a particular denomination, but as Maindee Church was the Regimental Church, it was certainly desirable that some record should be placed there, preferable (*sic*) brass plates containing the names of all those who had been killed.

At this stage the committee did not seem to see any contradiction between the need for a non-denominational site and the use of St John's, an Anglican church. Their main concern was the likely cost, which, if approximately 400 names were to be engraved on brass, would be 'considerable'. As an alternative, Lt. Col. Evill suggested a smaller brass plate inside the church with the words 'To the memory of officers and men of the 1st Monmouthshire regiment who fell etc.' plus, underneath the plate, a vellum book containing a detailed list of names and places where each officer or man was killed and 'a statue to be erected in some public place on the base of which names of all ranks who fell would be engraved.' This proposal met with general agreement and a sub-committee was appointed to deal with the matter.[13]

Later in the month the full committee met at St. John's vicarage. The vicar outlined a scheme for a parish war memorial comprising a stained glass window and a brass tablet with the names of 'the fallen' of the parish. It was pointed out that there was no question of a joint memorial; the battalion memorial would have to be distinct and it was agreed by the vicar and churchwardens that the original scheme for a brass plaque, vellum book and statue should go forward, with the vicar writing to several firms for quotations.[14]

Meeting in October, the sub-committee continued to favour a site at St John's since it had 'always been the one attended by the battalion' and the present vicar was chaplain to the battalion, even though this might not appeal to Non-Conformists and Roman Catholics.

Estimates had been received from five firms putting the cost at approximately £400 and it was formally agreed to proceed once Lord Tredegar, Honorary Colonel of the battalion, had sanctioned the scheme. It was further agreed that the money should be raised entirely from within the battalion rather than from the general public. Appeal letters were to be sent to past and present officers and to the next-of-kin of officers who had died, while other ranks were to be contacted through newspaper advertisements.[15] The exclusion of 'the general public' from the fundraising meant that decisions over the nature of the memorial were not subject to 'outside' political influences in the way that community memorials were. In practice, decisions were made by a small group of officers whose own political and social outlooks were occasionally reflected in their decision-making.

Within a week of the appeal being launched, the sub-committee, for reasons unknown, had a change of heart over the location of the memorial. St John's was no longer considered suitable and

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12 *Ibid*., 24 May 1919. The officers were Lt. Cols. C. H. Smith, Fothergill Evans, C.A. Evill D.S.O., H. Birrell-Anthony V.D., B. J. Rees and F. G. Phillips; Majors Hepburn and L. C. Llewellin; Captains M. C. Llewellin, H. C. R. Thompson, R. C. L. Thomas, W. M. B. Burnyeat, S. R. Martyn and L. Foster Steadman; Lieutenents L. F. Beynon and F. J. Evans.

13 *Ibid*., 12 May 1919.

14 *Ibid*., 24 May 1919.

15 *Ibid*., 27 Oct 1919.

an ‘absolutely unsectarian’ alternative was needed. The town hall was also rejected on the practical grounds that the council would be unlikely to agree to remove the notice boards in the porch, the only suitable site. After some discussion it was agreed that the best location would be St. Woolos Church, ‘the parish church of Newport’. There is no indication as to why St. Woolos was considered to be any less ‘sectarian’ than St. John’s. Although not minuted, it seems that the decision to use St. Woolos involved dropping plans for a brass plaque, vellum book and outside statue in favour of a stone memorial designed to fit the west end of the church. Again, the scheme was to be referred to Lord Tredegar. It was further agreed that, since the committee was ‘not a representative one’, it should be greatly enlarged to include other ranks or the proposals should be put to a general meeting of the battalion.[16]

Lord Tredegar subsequently gave his support to the St. Woolos scheme, offering £100 towards it, and a general meeting of the battalion was called, again with officers being notified by letter and ‘other ranks’ through newspaper advertisements.[17]

Although local newspapers described the general meeting, held in January 1920, as ‘well attended’, only twenty-one men were present. Once again, it was dominated by officers, with only five of those attending coming from ‘other ranks’. There was some discussion on the nature of the memorial, with Lieutenant Wynn Jones favouring a more practical memorial such as the financing of a bed in a local hospital. This appears to have been quickly brushed aside. Captain Martyn asked if funds might stretch to including an ‘outside statue’ but was told that the cheapest, a copy of the cenotaph, would cost £2,000, well beyond the funds likely to be available. In these circumstances, it was agreed that the St. Woolos scheme should go ahead.[18]

Members of the committee subsequently met the vicar of St. Woolos, Rev. H. D. Griffiths, at the church to view the potential location. It was agreed that, if sufficient funds were available, the memorial would be in two parts, one on either side of the west door, with an option for a more modest scheme on the north wall if funds were not sufficient. Colonel Evill agreed to ask his brother, the architect Norman Evill, to submit plans to the vicar and the committee for approval. By the end of June 1920, the appeal had raised £610, including £100 from Lord Tredegar and £44 from Lt. Col. Birrell-Anthony, Major Rees and Lt. Ingram, being the royalties from *Notes on Company Training*, a book they had jointly written.[19]

Work proceeded on gathering the names to be included. It was decided that the names should be listed in alphabetical order by rank and that, in the five cases in which there were men with the same name, their army numbers would be added to distinguish them. It was also decided

> … that the names of 2nd Lt, A.P. Duncan, who it is understood died from excess of alcohol, and Rifleman H. Frost who committed suicide in England, should not be included in the rolls.

These decisions give the impression that the committee was somewhat reactionary and harsh in its attitudes, perhaps a reflection of its domination by officers. Many local war memorials list names without distinction of rank. Lieutenant Duncan and Rifleman Frost both have Imperial (now

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16 *Ibid*., 3 November 1919.
17 *Ibid*., 12 December 1919.
18 *Ibid*., 8 Jan 1920. The 21 present at the meeting comprised six colonels, four captains, six lieutenants, one company sergeant major, three sergeants and one rifleman. For details of disputes over whether war memorials should be ‘utilitarian’ or purely symbolic, see Gaffney, *Aftermath*, Ch. 4 and Mason, ‘Commemorating the Great War’.
19 *Ibid*., 27 Feb 1920, 21 Jun 1920.

Commonwealth) War Graves Commission headstones and both are listed in the Newport Roll of Honour.[20]

On 5 November 1920 an advertisement was placed in the local newspapers pointing out that a full list of names would be published in the *South Wales Argus* the next day and would be available for inspection at the Drill Halls in Newport, Chepstow, Rhymney, Aberbargoed and Blackwood. Relatives and friends were asked to check the lists and submit alternatives.[21]

Norman Evill had submitted his designs for stone tablets, with an estimated cost of £430 plus £100 if certain radiators needed to be removed. After 'considerable discussion' over which battles or districts should be listed at the top of the plaques, it was decided to list 'South Africa 1900–1902, Neuve Chapelle, Ypres, Loos, Somme, Arras, Lens and the Canal du Nord.' A meeting of subscribers endorsed the decisions of the committee.[22]

Preparations for the unveiling ceremony took place against a background of strife. In March 1921 the coal mines had been returned from state control to private ownership and miners were faced with a 'lock-out' if they refused to accept pay cuts, precipitating a three month coal strike, which caused severe hardship in south Wales. The Miners Federation of Great Britain had called upon its partners in the 'Triple Alliance', the Transport and General Workers Union and the National Union of Railwaymen, to support them with strike action. The Memorial Committee feared that a rail strike would prevent the memorial from being transported from London, leading it to bring forward the date at which it was to be brought to Newport. In the event, on 'Black Friday' (15 April 1921) the NUR and TGWU decided not to support the miners through strike action and the memorial was brought to Newport unhindered.[23]

Nevertheless, although the 'Triple Alliance' of trade unions had fallen apart, south Wales was in the grip of the coal strike and the government had already made preparations to resist serious civil unrest, calling up reservists and volunteers from the Territorials as part of a 'Defence Force'. On Sunday 10 April a detachment of naval reservists arrived in Newport and marched to their billets wearing steel helmets and carrying rifles with fixed bayonets. Around 300 of the 1st Monmouthshires volunteered and camped in Tredegar Park, Newport. Being Territorials, the use of troops in these circumstances must have led to some divided loyalties amongst the Monmouthshires, living and working as they did amongst communities affected by the strike. Indeed, the Naval Reservists who had been stationed in Newport in April, had been recalled to Portsmouth after they had staged a 'collective protest', fearing that they were going to be used for strike breaking.[24] A joint meeting in Newport of the Comrades of the Great War, the Officers'

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[20] Lieutenant Duncan died on 26 May 1918 and is buried in Christchurch Cemetery Newport. Henry Frost died on 7 May 1917 and is buried in Kirkley Cemetery, Lowestoft. www.cwgc.org (accessed 11 Dec 2014).

[21] See, for example, *Monmouthshire Advertiser*, 5 Nov 1920. 597 names were finally placed on the memorial. This list should not be regarded as definitive. There is a discrepancy here with the 616 names compiled by Dixon (1995) using the official listings in *Soldiers Died in the Great War*. In addition to the omission of Lt. Duncan and Rifleman Frost, the name of L/Cpl H. C. Baker does not appear as he died of wounds after the memorial was unveiled. Other omissions are more difficult to explain e.g. Riflemen Frederick Angell was killed at Loos on 13 October 1915 and appears on the Loos Memorial to the Missing but does not appear on the St. Woolos Memorial. Many of the others who did not appear died of wounds in the UK after the war ended. One person seems to be listed twice: Alban Williams is listed correctly as A. Williams but also as W. Alban.

[22] Minute Book of the War Memorial and Provisional Committee, 1st Battalion The Monmouthshire Regiment T.F. 919–29, 1 Nov. 1920: Gwent Archives, D766/55.

[23] *Ibid*., 8 Apr 1921.

[24] *SWWA*,16 April 1921, 30 April 1921. *Western Morning News*, 5 May 1921. The Naval Reservists appear to have been replaced by men from HMS *Malaya* and HMS *Excellent*.

Association and the National Association of Discharged Sailors and Soldiers pledged 'strict neutrality' in the dispute.[25]

The strike also led to the date of the unveiling ceremony being changed. The obvious date, 8 May, was a Sunday but due to shortages of coal caused by the strike there were no valleys trains on Sundays. The ceremony was therefore re-arranged for Saturday 7 May.

The memorial, comprising two tablets of Nailsea stone with bronze crests and containing 597 names, was unveiled by Major-General Stuart-Wortley, who had been commander of the 46th (North Midland) Division, in which the 1st Monmouthshires had served from September 1915 until November 1918. He recited the words printed in the order of service:

> To the glory of God, and in memory of the five hundred and ninety seven Officers, Non-commissioned Officers and Riflemen of the 1st Battalion, The Monmouthshire Regiment, who laid down their lives in the Great War, for their King and Country, according to their Duty, I unveil these Tablets, to be solemnly dedicated in this ancient Church.

This was followed by the dedication by Rev. D.H.Griffiths, Vicar of Newport:

> In the name of the father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. I dedicate this Memorial to the Glory of God and in memory of those whose names are recorded thereon, who died for their Country in the Great War. They left all that was dear to them, endured hardness, faced danger, and finally passed out of the sight of men by the path of duty and self-sacrifice, giving up their own lives that others might live in freedom.

Rev. J.P. Hales of Nottingham, who had served in France and for a time had been chaplain to the battalion, paid tribute to the men and said that it had been a privilege to serve with them.[26]

Other local memorials included a plaque in the Sergeants' Mess at the Newport Drill Hall commemorating the Warrant Officers and sergeants who fell in the war, which was unveiled in 1928.[27]

The memorial at St Woolos became the focus for commemoration of 8 May, with annual parades and services being held, distinct from the more general commemoration on 11 November, which, in Newport, from 1923 onwards, took place at the town's cenotaph.

As with the unveiling of the St Woolos memorial, so the annual events reflected political and social developments, usually through comments made in speeches or sermons. At the 1925 memorial service Rev. D. E. Llewellyn-Jones, Rural Dean of Newport, declared:

> In their terrible baptism of fire on May 8, 1915, they were the victims of unpreparedness –with insufficient artillery and machine guns. Even that should be a rebuke to the parsimonious Pacifists who wanted to cut down armaments.

The official church parade was not held in 1926 as it fell during the General Strike, although a number of veterans gathered unofficially. The 1927 sermon, given by the 'special preacher' Rev A. G. A. Picton M.C., Rector of Machen, reflected the mood of disillusionment that was beginning to surface in the literature of the time:

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25 *South Wales Argus*, 14 April 1921.

26 *Western Mail*, 9 May 1921; *Monmouthshire Evening Post*, 9 May 1921. A copy of the order of Service is contained in the Minute Book of the Memorial Committee.

27 *South Wales Argus*, 16 May 1928.

> Those who fell believed they were giving themselves to secure a better world for their children and those who came after … Evil and stupid men there may have been who mismanaged the war and mismanaged the peace, but these men we commemorate today did the essentially great thing.
>
> Nowhere at home or abroad could they hear the cheery note of advance. Suspicion, distrust, stagnation, deadlock and a sense of helplessness were the features of the situation today.[28]

Other survivors of the war found more informal ways to commemorate the anniversary. Speaking in 1998, 74 year old Cliff Dibden, whose grandparents had owned the Rose & Crown pub in Chepstow, recalled that when he was a child the soldiers used to take the day off work on 8 May and come into the pub for a drink.[29]

Some 1st Mons veterans were positively hostile to the official parade. When his son asked Albert Rees why he did not march on 8 May, he uncharacteristically replied that 'he would not march with some bastards covered in medals that in his opinion should have been put up against a wall and shot.'[30]

In addition to providing commemoration at appropriate points at home, there was also a strong desire to remember the sacrifices close to the spots where they took place. As early as 1920, local people were taking part in 'pilgrimages' to the former battlefields in France and Flanders. The Reverend Evan Williams, Minister at Llanthewy Road Baptist Church, Newport, reported:

> We left Passchendaele and chose another route … which brought us down to St. Julien. This was where the 1st Mons were cut up. With sad interest we reverently went through the little cemetery to look at the graves. Here the men of our country fought valiantly and suffered greatly. There was nothing to see but blasted fields, ugly with the debris of battle, but we felt it was a privilege to walk over the ground made sacred by such heroism.[31]

The following month, Captain L. D. Whitehead visited the salient:

> We went on to the Ridge Wood, which had been torn to pieces …In June 1915, some of the Monmouths (Amalgamated Battalion) were buried in the middle of the field opposite Gordon Farm and, as I could not find them in the Ridge Wood Cemetery, I set to work to trace the graves on ground which had been shelled. I happened to have planted daffodils on these graves in 1915, and it was due to these flowering amidst the shell-torn ground that I was able to locate and report the graves to the GRC (Graves Registration Commission).[32]

In 1933 a group of schoolboys from Newport visited war graves in Belgium in what may have been the first of the 'battlefield tours' organised by many schools nowadays. By this time much of the debris had been cleared from the 'blasted fields' and there was something 'to see' with the erection of various memorials to those who fought and died. Those Monmouthshires who were amongst 'the missing' appeared on the Menin gate at Ypres, unveiled on 24 July 1927, and the Loos Memorial to the missing (4 August 1930), while 'the missing of the Somme' were listed on the Thiepval Memorial, unveiled on 1 August 1932.[33]

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28 *SWWA*, 16 May 1925, 15 May 1926, 14 May 1927. For examples of the use of speeches at remembrance events being used to promote political viewpoints, see Gaffney, A., *Aftermath: Remembering the Great War in Wales*, 109–12.

29 *SWWA*, 11 May 1998.

30 Letter from Mr Mal Rees in possession of the author, 29 Sept 1996.

31 *SWWA*, 29 May 1920.

32 *SWWA*, 26 May 1920.

33 *Ibid*., 6 May 1933, 30 July 1932.These monuments are beyond the scope of this article since they include names from many regiments and the names are listed by regiment rather than by battalion.

Many other memorials were being erected, but as the *Argus* pointed out, few related to specific battalions:

> There are not many battalions who have their own battlefield memorials. The memorials that have been erected on the sites of the British line in France and Flanders and in Egypt are monuments of remembrance of bigger units –divisions, army corps.[34]

The fact that the 1st Mons have two separate memorials of their own in Flanders therefore makes them particularly well represented amongst individual battalions.

It had originally been intended that the surplus from the St. Woolos memorial, which amounted to £81 13s 0d, would go towards supporting a scheme by Lt. Col. Birrell-Anthony for a memorial at Frezenberg, close to the scene of the events of 8 May. Birrell-Anthony had been commanding officer of the 2nd/1st Monmouthshires, training troops in preparation for them joining the 1st/1st Mons overseas. His only son, 2nd Lieutenant Henry Birrell-Anthony had been killed on 8 May. With Lt. Col. Birrell-Anthony's death in 1922, however, the scheme went into abeyance. Nevertheless, in 1928 a new opportunity arose when the trustees of the St. George's Memorial Church Ypres Fund accepted an offer to dedicate one of the side windows at the church to the 1st Monmouthshires. This was considered a real privilege since there were to be only eight such windows. The estimated cost was £61.10s 0d. Funds would also be spent producing photographs of the window for each of the battalion's drill halls. The church was already under construction and opened on 24 March 1929.[35]

The Memorial Committee was informed that there would be no choice over the design of the window. All had to be made by the firm of Clayton and Bell of London and had to contain two crests. The top half of the window would contain the crest of the battalion as used during the Great War with the battalion motto 'Gwell Angau Na Gwarth' ('Better Death Than Shame') underneath. The bottom half would show the new crest, adopted in 1924, showing the battalion's battle honours within a wreath of Flanders poppies. The colour was chosen so that the poppies would show in their 'natural hue' through the stained glass. The inscription would read 'To The Glory of God, and in memory of all ranks of the 1st Battalion Monmouthshire Regt (T. F.) who fell in the War, 1914–1918.'[36]

At the time of the unveiling of the memorial window at St George's Ypres it was regarded as an alternative to the scheme originally proposed by Lt. Col. Birrell-Anthony. His original scheme, endorsed by subscribers to the Memorial Committee in 1920, had been for a cottage and a stone memorial at Frezenberg.[37] Lt. Col. Birrell-Anthony died in 1922, aged 62. In his will he bequeathed:

> …land at St Jean, near Ypres, Belgium, and a sum not exceeding £1000 upon trust for his only son, Henry Birrell-Anthony, and other officers and men of the 1st Monmouthshire regiment, who gave their lives for their country.

His will further directed his trustees to consult with Lt. Col. Evill 'as to his intentions in the matter'.[38]

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[34] *Ibid*., 22 May 1931.

[35] Memorial Book, 5 July 1921, 11 Feb 1928. For details of St George's Memorial Church see www.stgeorgesmemorialchurchypres.com.

[36] *Ibid*., 11 Feb 1928, *SWWA*, 18 Feb 1928. The window was removed for safe keeping during World War Two and put into place in 1947 (*SWWA*, 12 May 1963).

[37] *Ibid*., 1 Nov 1920.

[38] *SWWA*, 2 June 1923. Lt. Birrell-Anthony's great aunt had already presented 'Anthony House' as a preliminary training school for probationer nurses to the King Edward VII Hospital, Cardiff, in his memory: *Western Mail*, 13 Dec 1917.

Fig. 3: Part of window at St George's Church Ypres. *Photograph: The author.*

In spite of this it seemed that no progress had been made in the five years after his death and, as Colonel Evill explained to the committee, 'it was very doubtful if his scheme as originally outlined would ever be practical.' This led the Memorial Committee to rescind its resolution to use surplus funds from the St. Woolos memorial for the scheme.[39] It seems, however, that somebody from the

[39] *Ibid*., 11 Feb 1928. No reasons were given but it seems likely that the available funds fell short of those required for the complete scheme. Lt. Col. Birrell-Anthony's wife had died in 1918 and with no surviving children there were no members of the immediate family left to push the scheme forward.

Fig. 4: Frezenberg memorial. *Photograph: The author.*

Birrell-Anthony family was still anxious to commemorate the 1st Monmouthshires. On May 1927 an advertisement had appeared in *The Times*:

> In honoured memory of 2nd Lieut. Henry Anthony Birrell Anthony, 1st Mons Regt., who fell at Ypres, May 8, 1915, only child of the late Lieut.-Colonel Henry Anthony Birrell Anthony, 1/2nd Mons. Regt. J.P., V.D.; also of all other Officers and Men of the Monmouthshire Regiments who fell on that day and in the Great War.[40]

The same advert appeared every year until 1953. This may explain why, following the completion of the window at St George's, the Frezenberg scheme was resurrected in a more limited form. No cottage was built but a stone plinth was placed inside a stone enclosure on the land that Birrell-Anthony had purchased. It had originally been intended that the memorial should be made from Monmouthshire stone, but 'difficulties with the Belgian authorities' meant that the stone had to be sourced locally.

The inscription on the plinth read:

> In memory of Lieut. H.A.Birrell-Anthony and the officers of the 1st Battalion the Monmouthshire Regiment who fell at this spot in the Second Battle of Ypres on the 8th May 1915 and the NCOs and riflemen who fell at the same time.

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[40] *The Times*, 9 May 1927. The advertisement should have read 2nd/1st Mons.

It was unveiled by Colonel Evill and dedicated by Rev. G. R. Milner, Chaplain of St George's Church Ypres, on 23 May 1931, in a ceremony attended by 35 'pilgrims' from Monmouthshire. Amongst the veterans of 8 May present were Major Mostyn Llewellin, who was badly wounded and taken prisoner, Corporal Joliffe of Chepstow, who had been taken prisoner, and Sergeant James Beattie D.C.M., M.M., 'who as a corporal showed great heroism and was badly wounded in an effort to bring in a wounded officer'. The relatives present included Mrs Blight of Sudbrook, whose son Audley was killed on 8 May and Mrs Jones, 'widow of Sergeant Jones, who was killed.' As with some of the other ceremonies dealt with above, it was affected by the political and economic situation at the time. It was reported that many veterans and relatives had wanted to travel to Frezenberg but had been unable to do so because, with Wales in the grip of the Depression, they did not have the funds to do so. Many had to be content with a photograph, originally published in the *Argus*, copies of which were sent 'all over the world'.[41]

Colonel Evill recalled the scene on the fateful day:

> The ground was taped to a yard and we were overseen in the hastily dug trenches of a new position. There was a mass of bursting shells, but the men remained with stout hearts until the evening when, beyond the ridge … they were blown out of the trenches. They had held on long enough. This ground will always be regarded by us and hundreds at home who are now thinking of us as a piece of Monmouthshire.

The Burgomaster of St. Jean, speaking in English, recalled how he had worked with Lt. Col. Birrell-Anthony in securing the land:

> One day a friend of mine came to see me and asked me to act as an interpreter between him and an English gentleman. From then, we, Colonel Birrell-Anthony and myself, were friends. He came here to find out where his son, his only child, and fellow officers and men have given their lives. He wanted to become possessed of the site.
>
> I considered it a holy duty to assist him in his pious endeavours. I hope in having done so, having lightened the sorrows in the bereavement of that noble man, I have repaid a small part of the gratitude which we owe to your noble nation for the assistance and help given us by your courageous, heroic soldiers. By a happy chance was this site to be put up for sale by public auction and a few days later, thus he became in possession of the very land he wanted.

The Burgomaster explained that the site would be maintained by a farmer who owned the adjoining field. The farmer's family had occupied the same farm for centuries and the Burgomaster believed he and his descendants would take great care of it.[42] Those present must have been struck, in the fine weather that prevailed that day, by the contrast between the scene on 8 May, and the peace and quiet they were now experiencing, particularly when, during the silence following the 'Last Post', 'a lark rose in full song above the memorial'.

Laurel wreaths were laid by Mr Birrell of Chepstow, uncle of Lieutenant Birrell-Anthony, on behalf of the relatives; by Colonel Evill on behalf of past and present men of the 1st Monmouthshires; from the British residents of Ypres, which read 'to the glory of the Monmouths'; and from the

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41 *SWWA*, 22 Feb 1931, 27 May 1931. 'Sergeant Jones' was presumably 712 Lance-Sergeant Thomas Jones.

42 *Ibid*., 27 May 1931. The site was taken over and is now maintained by the Imperial (now Commonwealth) War Graves Commission in 1960, at which point the Old Comrades Association sent £450 'to provide funds for keeping the memorial in a good state': *SWWA*,14 May 1960.

Fig. 5: Unveiling Frezenberg memorial. Reproduced by permission of the Royal Regiment of Wales Museum, Brecon.

Fig. 6: *The Eighth of May*, Fred Roe. Reproduced by permission of Newport Museum and Art Gallery.

Burgomaster of St Jean. Colonel Evill went on to plant yew trees, which had been grown from seed in his garden in Chepstow, at each corner of the memorial enclosure. (In 1934 it was reported that the trees planted at each corner of the enclosures 'had flourished' but they have since died and not been replaced.) The party went on to visit Neuville St Vaast, a small village which had been 'adopted' by Newport.[43]

In 1934, in preparation for the twentieth anniversary of the event, the *South Wales Argus* decided to commission a commemorative painting, *The Eighth of May*, and approached Captain R. C. L. Thomas, Adjutant of the 1st Mons, in order to obtain the battalion's co-operation and assistance. The artist chosen to produce it was Fred Roe. He was already a well-known artist and illustrator and as such commanded a hefty fee of 200 guineas. A public appeal was organised to raise the necessary funds and copies of the painting were to be sold at half a guinea each, with any excess funds to go to the Royal Gwent Hospital.[44]

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[43] *Ibid*., 27 May 1931, 19 May 1934. Neuville St Vaast is just south of the Canadian Memorial Park at Vimy Ridge. It is the site of the largest German cemetery in France.

[44] *Ibid*., 28 Dec 1935. Although the painting was officially commemorating all three battalions of the Monmouthshire Regiment, to all intents and purposes it was a 1st Mons memorial. The scene depicted members of this battalion and it was this battalion that was approached regarding the scheme. The fact that it remains on display in Newport reinforces this impression.

Roe had not served in the war since he was already over 50 when it broke out, and therefore over 70 when he was commissioned to produce the painting. He had first exhibited at the Royal Academy back in 1888, concentrating on portraits and historical topics such as *Nelson Leaving Portsmouth for Victory 1805* and *Bedchamber in Ann Hathaway's Cottage*, both painted in 1890. He also contributed regularly to *The Connoisseur* magazine, writing and illustrating articles on historic buildings and their contents. He was also an expert in oak furniture and his book *A History of Old Oak Furniture*, published in 1920, is still available today.[45] He didn't change greatly with the times and fashions. It is noticeable that the art critics become less enthusiastic about his work as the years went by. Thus, in 1888, *The Times'* review of the Royal Academy Exhibition stated, 'One of the successes made by new artists is Mr Fred Roe's illustration of Barnaby Rudge, a very cleverly painted piece of genre.' By 1910 his work is described by the same paper as leaving only a 'slight impression', and by 1934 as lacking 'artistic as distinct from illustrative or sentimental appeal'. His obituary in *The Times* in 1947 stated that he 'specialised in a kind of picture that for a long time has been regarded as old fashioned.'

Roe was aware, however, that there was a demand for paintings with 'illustrative or sentimental appeal' and that the Great War had created a new wave of demand for such work. So during the war he turned his hand to painting war scenes such as *Somewhere at the Front. Soldiers Round a Camp Fire at Night, Western Front* (1915) and *The Boys Come Marching Home* (1916). He continued after the war had finished with, amongst others, *4th Suffolks at Neuve Chapelle* (1918), *A Relieved Platoon of 1/5th Battalion Gloucestershire Regiment at Hebuterne, France c.1916* (1919) and beyond the First World War to the wars of Empire with *2nd Battalion 5th Gurkha Rifles at Ahnai Tangi, North-West Frontier, India 14 January 1920* (1920).[46]

In order to obtain a 'realistic' image which highlighted key features of the action and ensured that details were correct, Roe had interviewed survivors from the battalion. The painting depicts the scene at about noon on 8 May, showing members of D Company from Newport, who were on the extreme right of the battalion position. German forces, including marines in naval uniforms, had been attacking the British lines since the early hours of the morning. The Germans were being supported by artillery and the foremost German soldier is shown carrying a ranging disk, black on one side, white on the other; the white side faces his own lines to help artillery spotters gauge the furthest extent of their advance. By this stage of the day the British artillery had run out of ammunition. According to Colonel Evill, speaking at the unveiling in December 1935, the Germans had 185 heavy guns; the British only 25, some of which dated from the Boer War and had no ranging devices. A German Taube aircraft is shown, probably being used for reconnaissance. It was already obsolete by this stage and would have been no match for modern fighters. However, there was no Allied air support available at Frezenberg.

The British trenches are shown as shallow and, at this relatively early stage of the war, there was very little barbed wire. In any case, they had been severely damaged by the German artillery before the 1st Mons occupied them on 7 May. The British are armed with long-barrelled Lee Enfield Rifles, rather than the more up-to-date shorter barrel versions, and wear soft caps, steel helmets not being widely issued until 1916. The officer wears a black regimental badge on the back of his cap to identify him to his men without doing the same to the enemy. The Germans have penetrated the British lines to the right of the Monmouthshires, so the Monmouthshires are moving back into the

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45 Pub. Nabu Press, 2010.

46 *The Times*, 25 May 1888, 22 Sept 1910, 24 March 1934, 19 Aug 1947. For Fred Roe paintings see www.bbc.co.uk/arts/yourpaintings/artists/fred-roe (accessed 25 Nov 2014).

communication trench in an effort to prevent the Germans getting around behind them. They would then pull back in an attempt to form a new line of defence.

The central figure is Captain Harold Thorne Edwards. He was the son of a Newport solicitor and educated in Chepstow. He had spent some time farming in Rhodesia before returning to join the battalion. Eye witness accounts testify that at this point in the proceedings the Germans were calling on the Monmouthshires to surrender, to which Edwards responded with the call of 'surrender be damned'. He was shot and killed shortly after.[47]

The painting was consistent in theme and style with Roe's earlier work. Its style is very traditional while the theme is the heroic resistance of the Monmouthshires. It makes no concessions to the modernist styles or the sense of disillusionment of famous war artists such as Paul Nash, C.R.W. Nevinson and Wyndham Lewis.[48] It was, nevertheless, clearly an accomplished piece of 'documentary' painting.

Even in the context of the time it was painted, its theme of conflict with Germany and its martial and patriotic message would not have been universally welcomed. By 1935 the message of a heroic war against the fiendish Hun was being replaced in the literature by a sense of futile waste resulting from an unnecessary war. Even Lloyd George, whose memoirs were published the previous year, was coming close to this view with his comment in his War Memoirs, that

> 'the nations slithered over the brink into the boiling cauldron of war without any trace of apprehension or dismay ... The nations backed their machines over the precipice.'[49]

By this time, the 'literature of disillusionment' was well established, particularly though memoirs such as Robert Graves' *Goodbye To All That* (1929) and the 1930 film version of Erich Maris Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front*.

Politically it was a period in which the efficacy of conflict was being downplayed – the right favoured appeasement with the new Nazi regime in Germany and was seeking to remain on good terms with Mussolini, in spite of his invasion of Abyssinia in October 1935; the left placed its faith in the League of Nations and non-violent means of dealing with sources of conflict.

So it could be argued that the painting was an anachronism from the very outset. Yet, there is no sign that it was regarded in this way within Monmouthshire at the time. In spite of the growing prominence of the 'alternative' narrative of futility, the official narrative of 1914/1918 as a war for civilisation against barbarism still held strong. It was natural that it should remain so while personal memories of the war and the losses were so strong. The 'death pennies' issued to the next-of-kin of those who lost their lives said 'He died for freedom and honour' because they couldn't say 'He died for not very much really.' And if this was true when the death pennies were issued in 1918/19, in some ways it was even more true by 1935. By this time it was apparent that the more concrete war aims – the long terms security of Britain and the integrity of the empire, let alone everlasting peace and freedom and 'homes fit for heroes in a land fit for heroes' – had not been secured. It therefore became even more necessary to fall back on the loftier concepts of honour, valour and duty – the concepts that are at the heart of this painting.

At the unveiling ceremony, almost twenty years after Wilfred Owen wrote *dulce et decorum*

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47 *SWWA*, 28 Dec 1935.

48 For a discussion of the work of these artists see Gough, P., *A Terrible Beauty: British Artists in the First World War* (Bristol, 2012).

49 Lloyd George, D., *War Memoirs* (London, 1934).

est, one can easily imagine the phrase being used in its original face-value sense rather than in the ironic sense used by Owen. Thus the *Argus* felt able to talk of 8 May 1915 as 'a glorious episode'. Colonel Evill, who assumed command of the battalion after the death of Colonel Robinson, came very close to it when he said of Captain Harold Edwards that 'the death he died was the death he would have wished, for he was a gallant soldier. He had come back from Africa to serve his old battalion and he died for its honour.[50]

The traditional style of the painting is also relevant here. The painting was a form of war memorial and, as such, it had to accord with public taste. In her book on public remembrance in Wales, Angela Gaffney points out that 'the majority of memorials were built in the decade after the war when public and private grief were intense and the resulting memorials were usually fairly "traditional" in design'. She points out that for every *avant garde* design such as Eric Gill's at Chirk, there were dozens of purely representational designs.[51] Although Fred Roe's painting was produced over a decade after most war memorials, the same influences still applied to a large extent. It can be seen as the visual equivalent of Dyfrig's verse from 1916 quoted above. (Indeed Dyfrig himself donated five shillings towards the painting.)[52]

Although *The Eighth of May* is not a great work of art, it is a very competent piece of reportage which seems to have been fully accepted as an appropriate tribute to the 'sons of Gwent' who fought and fell. In these ways it served its purpose well.

In 1937, in line with the government's commitment to improving the country's defences against aerial attack, the 1st Monmouthshires were converted into a searchlight unit, and so played a very different role in the Second World War than in the first. After the Second World War there were new losses to commemorate but in spite of 8 May now being more commonly remembered as Victory in Europe Day, the sacrifices of the 1st Monmouthshires in the Great War continued to be commemorated from time to time. In 1947, referring to the eight may tree in Belle Vue Park, the *Argus* noted:

> During the recent war it was noticed that these eight trees were not identified by any distinguishing mark, and Newport Town Council felt some concern at the prospect that their original object should be forgotten. The council resolved that a suitably-inscribed plaque should be provided by the Corporation.[53]

The plaque was duly unveiled in May at a ceremony attended by members of the battalion's Old Comrades Association. The guest of honour, Major Mostyn Llewellin, who had been wounded and captured on 8 May 1915, gave a speech which reflected the experiences of a Second World War and the onset of the Cold War:

> Such memorials had two purposes – one to remind of sacrifices of those who suffered, and also to emphasise the cause of freedom in which these sacrifices were made. There was only one way to maintain peace, and that was to be ready for the aggressor. He hoped Britain would never again disarm; otherwise they would betray the cause for which men died.[54]

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50 *SWWA*, 28 Dec 1935.
51 Gaffney, *Aftermath*, 7.
52 *SWWA*, 23 May 1936.
53 *Ibid*., 10 May 1947.
54 *Ibid*., 17 May 1947. The trees have since died and the plaque appears to be lost. In a letter to the author dated 16 December 1994, Mr Jim Jones from Newport's Leisure and Amenities Department, stated that he had been unable to trace any record of the trees.

Fig. 7: Commemorative plaque on Chepstow Drill Hall. Photograph: *The author.*

The annual parade and service continued for some years after the Second World War. In 1954, for example, it was reported that following a memorial service at St Woolos and march down Stow hill, 250 people attended an a reunion dinner, at which Lieutenant Colonel Godfrey Evill, son of Colonel Charles Evill, presented a portrait of his father, which was to have 'an honoured place' in Newport drill hall. In 1960 it was reported that the anniversary 'was remembered in many towns in Monmouthshire and that thousands of people watched the parade, which was larger than usual.'[55]

As the years passed, however, 8 May began to lose its significance. By 1964, with the number of survivors dwindling and many of those becoming too infirm to march, only a 'representative party' of the Old Comrades Association attended the service at St Woolos, although the annual reunion dinner continued.[56] In 1991 a correspondent to the *South Wales Argus*, whose father had been wounded on the day, lamented the fact that 'most years go by without a mention of this gallant

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55 *Ibid*., 15 May 1954.

56 *Ibid*., 14 May 1964. The dinner that year, held at the Tredegar Arms Hotel, was addressed by Colonel Dai Hughes, the battalion's last survivor of the Boer War.

band of men'.[57] Nevertheless, commemorations of various sorts happened from time to time. When the Drill Hall on Stow Hill was demolished in 1983 to make way for road improvements, a pair of granite plaques was erected in remembrance of their departure:

> Here stood Stow Hill Drill Hall from which sallied Newport's own territorial soldiers, the First (Rifle) Battalion the Monmouthshire Regiment, to fight for Britain at the outbreak of two world wars. They wrote the saddest yet most glorious chapter in Newport's history on May the 8th 1915, when in an heroic stand against great odds before Ypres, the Monmouthshires helped to bar the Germans from the Channel ports. Of their strength of 500, only 129 officers and men survived.[58]

A plaque with a similar purpose was erected by the Chepstow Society at Chepstow Drill Hall on 8 May 1998[59] while the centenary of the Battle of Frezenberg will be marked by the unveiling of a new plaque in Newport, erected following a public subscription organised by Newport councillor, Charles Ferris.

The various memorials to the 1st Monmouthshires have been carefully preserved and continue to occupy significant locations, both within Gwent and in Flanders, thus helping to maintain public awareness of the Great War. Other influences have, however, been at work on the public consciousness. Films such as *Oh! What a Lovely War* (1969) and *Testament of Youth* (2014) plus a host of television programmes, including *Blackadder* have done much to sustain interest in the conflict but have also played a major role in fostering the view that the war was no more than a futile slaughter with 'lions led by donkeys'. As a result, present-day observers of memorials may well interpret them differently from how they were originally intended. The memorials were erected to honour the bravery and sense of duty of those who died. While recognising the sacrifice, the dominant feeling of many modern observers, gazing upon the long lists of names or poignant inscriptions, may well be of anger and disgust at the pointless loss of life. They may well react like Sassoon rather than like Dyfrig. To what extent our perceptions of the Great War and of the memorials that arose from it will have changed once the centenary years have passed remains to be seen.

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57 *Ibid*.,17 June 1991.

58 The statement that only 129 survived suggests that 371 were killed. In reality, this figure included not just those who were killed but those who were wounded or taken prisoner. See Note 2.

59 *South Wales Argus*, 11 May 1998.

‘IN THE PINK’: PRIVATE PERCY JAMES SCANNELL AND THE MONMOUTHSHIRE REGIMENT DURING THE FIRST WORLD WAR

By Christabel Hutchings and Richard Frame

Percy James Scannell was born on 11 January 1897 at Newport and was one of many soldiers of the Monmouthshire Regiment who lost their lives in the First World War.[1] He served on the Western Front for approximately eight months in 1917 and was involved in the Battle of Arras and the Third Battle of Ypres. He died of wounds on 26 August 1917. Percy’s archive of First World War letters and photographs is held by Newport Museum and Art Gallery. Although Percy’s letters lack information about his life on the Western Front, they provide an impetus and basis for research into his experiences, firstly as a member of the First Monmouthshire Battalion serving in Britain and secondly, as member of the Second Monmouthshire Battalion, serving overseas.[2]

The Monmouthshire Regiment was formed out of volunteer battalions of the South Wales Borderers and was established under the 1907 Haldane reforms which founded the Territorial Force.[3] Territorial units were mostly infantry regiments and were essentially home part-time defence regiments required to practise drills at the weekend or in the evenings and attend a summer camp once a year. Territorial battalions recruited locally and were supported by their communities and Percy joined the 1st Monmouthshire Battalion which formed at Stow Hill, Newport. Following mobilization, the 1st Mons were sent to their war station at Pembroke Dock and from there they moved to Oswestry and by the end of August were at Northampton forming part of the ‘Central Force’ organised in the event of a possible German invasion.[4] On 15 August 1914 orders were issued to separate the territorial forces into ‘Foreign Service’ or first line units and ‘Home Service’ or second line divisions. Those territorial soldiers who signed the ‘Imperial Service Obligation’ or ‘pledge’ were able to undertake Imperial Service overseas.[5] They received a silver badge denoting their status.[6] Despite the supply of Territorial Forces, Field Marshal Earl Kitchener, the Minister for War, preferred to expand the army by raising new components of civilian volunteers.[7]

Percy’s decision to join the Territorial Force was not surprising. Most families were very much aware of the importance of the military in maintaining the international prestige of Britain and the newspapers of the time recounted the wars and skirmishes which maintained and expanded the British Empire. Percy was a member of a close knit family and his upbringing and the times in which he lived connected him to Territorial units. William Scannell and his wife, Lillian raised four children. The first two, Reginald (Reg) and Evelyn (Ev), were born in Gloucester, but the family moved back to Newport to live with Lillian Scannell’s mother, Elizabeth Robinson, in Portland Street and it was here that Percy and his brother William (Bill), were born.[8] [See Fig.1]. William

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1 Newport Museum and Art Gallery: [hereafter NM&AG:] 96.664:1; *Brown’s B.-P. Boy Scouts’ Diary 1912–13* (Glasgow, 1912–13). The diary records Percy’s birthday.

2 The Monmouthsire Regiment is also referred to as the ‘Monmouths’ or ‘Mons’.

3 Leaflets: 7-BO7-11-MONR – WW1 – All Battalions Regimental Museum of The Royal Welsh (Brecon), 16 July 2012.

4 *Ibid*.

5 Dixon, John, *Out Since 14, A History of the 1/2nd battalion: The Monmouthshire Regiment 1914–19* (Abertillery, 2000), 6.

6 Diary of Private C.P. Heare, 1914–1918, 7 and 8. Property of Michael Heare.

7 Dixon, *Out Since 14*, 7.

8 See 1911 Census. It was Bill’s family who donated Percy’s archive to Newport Museum.

Fig. 1: The Scannel Children: Percy far right. Reproduced with permission of Newport Museum and Art Gallery. © NM&AG: 96.469.21

Scannell senior was a self-employed boot maker and following the grandmother's death the family moved to 199 Caerleon Road, Newport, and then to 'The Crest' in Ponthir Road, Caerleon.[9] A postcard sent to Percy's father illustrates a Working Man's Riffle Club camp at Bisley in Surrey in 1906. Such clubs were popular before the war and aimed at improving the military utility of the working man. Patriotism and militarism also encouraged the growth of youth organisations. Reg was a member of the 7th Newport Company of the Boys Brigade, and had attended a Camp at Lodmoor in Weymouth in July 1906.[10] Percy became a member of St Julian's Newport Boy Scout troop.[11] Baden-Powell, its founder, had served in the British army from 1876–1910.[12] The aim of such organisations was to build character and instil youth with wholesome values which fostered 'Good Citizenship'.[13] A factor in Percy's decision to join the Monmouthshire Regiment must have been that his brother Reg had joined the Army Service Corps in 1913 before the outbreak of war. This unit was responsible for keeping the British Army supplied with all its essential provisions including food, equipment and ammunition. Percy was very proud when his brother was made a sergeant in 1917.[14]

It is difficult to identify exactly when Percy joined the 1st Monmouthshire Battalion as many Attestation Records were destroyed in air-raids during the Second World War. Percy's obituary states he joined the army three years before his death which would have been sometime in late 1914 or early 1915. He would have been old enough to join in January 1914 when he was seventeen as Territorial recruits could join up at a younger age than regulars who had to wait until they were eighteen. It is therefore possible that Percy had joined the 1st Monmouthshire Battalion before war broke out on 4 August 1914. Photographs in the archive are as important as the letters and provide clues about Percy's early service in the 1st Monmouthshire Battalion. Fig. 2 illustrates a mass muster which took place at Newport Athletic Ground in 1914, and its inclusion in the archive indicates that Percy might have taken part.[15] Fig. 3 is a postcard from Aberystwyth and is the first dated communication in the archive. It proves that Percy was in the army by 5 Jan 1915 and on 11 January he would have celebrated his eighteenth birthday.[16] On 13 February 1915 the 1st Monmouthshire Battalion landed in France, but as Percy needed to be nineteen to serve overseas he remained in Britain as a member of the second reserve-line of the 1st Monmouthshire Battalion ('2/1 Monmouths'). As a reservist, Percy was moved around Britain. The 2nd 1st Battalion moved to Cambridge, Northampton, Bedford, Lowestoft and Suffolk.[17] Percy's letter from Bedford emphasizes the soldier's need for cleanliness and obedience which was essential in warfare. The letter also shows how close the family were as Percy does not hesitate to tell them that he had been reprimanded. 'What do you think? I was told off for guard [duty] on Monday night … I hope you won't have a fit.'[18]

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9 Johns' Newport Directories, 1908, 1909–10, 1913, 1917.
10 NM&AG: 96.469:1, 20 July 1906.
11 NM&AG: 96.664:1; *Brown's B.-P. Boy Scouts' Diary.*
12 *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, http://www.oxforddnb.com/ (accessed 2 June 2014).
13 Baden Powell, *Scouting for Boys*: *A Handbook for Instruction in Good Citizenship* (Oxford, 2005 edn.)
14 NM&AG: 96.664:15 and 28.
15 NM&AG: 96.469:12.
16 NM&AG: 96.469:11.
17 Leaflet 7-BO7-11-MONR-WW1; See also NM&AG: 96.664:26. Only second line battalions were stationed at Bedford and Percy's letter from Bedford proves he was in a reserve battalion.
18 NM&AG: 96.664:26.

Fig. 2: A Mass Muster at Newport Athletic Ground. © NM&AG: 96.469.12

Fig. 3: Percy in the 2nd/1st Mons Battalion at Aberystwyth, 5 January 1915: Percy, front row second from right. © NM&AG: 96.469.11

Fig. 4: Formal photograph of Percy possibly taken at the time he went to the Western Front.
© NM&AG: 96.469.9

A letter written to Percy's parents following his death reveals that he was still in Britain in January 1916 even though he was nineteen years of age and old enough to be overseas.[19] One can only speculate as to the reason. He could have been unfit for overseas service, or might have been carrying out duties on the home front that were seen as important. One cannot be exactly sure when Percy went overseas, but the need for more soldiers after the devastation on the Somme, the fact that he arrived in winter and that his first dated letters on the Western Front begin in February, suggest late January 1917. Fig. 4, a formal photograph of Percy, was possibly taken before he went overseas. Percy could not choose which Battalion he was drafted into and so Percy left the 2nd/1st Monmouthshire Battalion in Britain and joined the 1st/2nd Battalion in France.[20] As with many

[19] NM&AG: 96.664:38. A letter from Maisie Franklin to Percy's parents dated 12 Sept., 1917.
[20] NM&AG: 96.664:25. All quoted extracts ignore Percy's habit of taking new lines for almost every sentence.

soldiers this was probably the first time Percy had set foot outside Britain and Percy wrote to his family to inform them of his arrival in France:

> We arrived at Rouen Monday morning after rather a rough journey, but I was a good sailor not being ill once. Have a lot of 1st Mons whom I know very well. Please write per return and send some fags. Hope you are quite well I'm in the pink myself. Rouen is such a lovely place you wouldn't believe it unless you saw it. We were 3 hours on the water, a little longer than going to Weston [super Mare]. There are some nice people in the Y.M.C.A.[21]

New recruits were put through three months of basic training which built physical fitness and confidence, instilled discipline and obedience, and taught the fundamental military skills necessary to function in the army. Some of these recruits would have been conscripted following the Military Service Act of 27 January 1916, but some like Percy came from territorial reserve battalions. Even long serving territorial reservists needed to upgrade their training to meet the demands of war. A soldier, like Percy, arriving in 1917 could not have been prepared for what he was about to face and soldiers had to adapt to changes in the tactics and technologies of warfare. In January 1917, Acting Regimental Sergeant Major Cornelius Love of the Second Mons states in his diary, 'new drafts were not hardened up to the work and furthermore were not strong enough' and out of sixty-five that arrived he 'could not pick one able and strong enough to do the work that was required of him.[22] By 9 February there were still problems with recruits and it was recorded in the Battalion War Diary that the Medical Officer sent a complaint to Divisional Head Quarters because the new reinforcements were not up to standard.[23]

When Percy joined the 2nd Monmouthshire Battalion overseas it had already made its mark in battles on the Western Front. It was one of only ten territorial battalions whose soldiers were awarded the 1914 Star and, after entering the trenches, it was the first territorial battalion to be entrusted with holding a battalion sector of the line. Furthermore, it was destined to be the only territorial battalion to march into Germany at the end of the War.[24] The Monmouthshire battalions arrived in France as infantry units that supported the work of regular army units. On 8 May 1915 during the Second Battle of Ypres, the 1st and 3rd Monmouthshire Battalions were involved in events which decimated their numbers. The painting *The Eighth of May* by Fred Roe illustrates the heroism that accompanied this slaughter.[25] The remaining soldiers were amalgamated into a single battalion, but by July and August their strength had increased and so they formed into three battalions once more. From early 1915 it had been realised that fit soldiers, trained in infantry methods, were needed to carry out certain tasks necessary for trench warfare and that such tasks could not always be left to the Royal Engineers. In 1915 Captain Arthur H. Edwards and forty men from the 2nd Monmouthshires were detached for mining operations.[26] They were needed to tunnel under no man's land and to lay explosives which were then detonated before an attack. Their experience in the Monmouthshire collieries meant they were prepared for this dangerous work. The success of such specialist groups

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21 *Ibid*.

22 Diary of CSM [Company Sergeant Major] C.J. Love DCM', 1914–1919. See serialisation March–September, in *Pontypool Free Press of Monmouthshire*, 7 July 1933. He is referred to as Sergeant in the text, but for a few weeks when he became Acting Regimental Sergeant Major.

23 War Diary of 1st /2nd Monmouthshire Battalion: 9 Feb., 1917. Consulted at The Regimental Museum of The Royal Welsh, Brecon. Copyright is with The National Archives; See also Dixon, *Out Since 14*, 93.

24 Dixon, *Out Since 14*, Foreword.

25 Fred Roe (1864–1947). The painting is on display at Newport Museum and Art Gallery.

26 Dixon, *Out Since14*, 28, 53–4.

of soldiers was not lost on the commanders and pioneer battalions were created from industrial areas of Britain. In September 1915 the 1st/3rd and the 1st/1st Monmouthshires were made pioneer battalions. They were attached to regular divisions; the 1st/3rd to the 49th West Riding Division and the 1st/1st Battalion to 46th North Midland Division. In May 1916 the 1st /2nd Mons were attached to the 29th Division. They were known as the Incomparable 29th Division and had landed in France from Gallipoli in March 1916.[27] Becoming a pioneer battalion meant collecting extra transport facilities which consisted of thirty-two light draught horses, eight pack ponies and eight general service wagons.[28] As pioneers they carried out support work vital for the regular regiments to which they were attached. They constructed and repaired communication trenches, built roads and carried out general maintenance. This was dangerous work, as they were close to the German front lines and often had to work at night in former 'no man's land'. Even between major battles, pioneers were subjected to enemy fire. As Monmouthshire regimental historian John Dixon has pointed out, such a change might not have been greeted with universal pleasure as possibly many soldiers would have preferred to remain in an infantry support role.[29] Nevertheless, the 2nd Mons and the 29th Division forged a close relationship although the 2nd Mons were occasionally attached to other units.

Letters were of great importance during the First World War. Every week 12.5 million letters left Britain for the Western Front, and 2,500 women sorted the troops' mail in a purpose-built building in Regent's Park.[30] Percy's family had moved to 25 Charles Street in Newport at about the time he went overseas, and the original door and letter box which received his letters can still be seen today. The amount of correspondence underlines the level of literacy spawned by the growth of compulsory elementary education. Percy had attended both Bolt Street and Durham Road schools and his 1911 end of school report indicates that his conduct was 'very satisfactory' and his work 'thoroughly well done'. He then worked as a clerk for Swallwell and Harvard Architects in Dock Street, where he was termed 'punctual and diligent' and 'carefully carried out the duties entrusted to him'.[31] Although apostrophes were often left out of his letters and there is only one question mark, Percy's spelling is largely accurate. Even so, paragraphs seem to confound him and usually each sentence is given a new line. Keeping in touch with the normality of home life was important and Percy wrote to his family as well as to a wide circle of friends. Letters from a girl must have been valuable in a male society and Vi Rogers wrote from Newport as did Maisie Franklin from Liverpool.[32] When soldiers were in the front line, communication could be sent via Field Service Post Cards and several exist in the archive.[33] Green envelopes allowed soldiers to avoid battalion censorship, but were sparingly issued and soldiers had to sign the envelope to state that on their 'honour' the letter only included 'private and family matters'. Although not censored locally such letters might be subject to a random examination at the regimental base. The archive reveals that Percy used one green envelope to send a letter to his family, but most men used these envelopes to communicate with their sweethearts or wives.[34] Letters were important to Percy and he reprimanded

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27 Dixon, *Out Since 14*, 65–6.

28 War Diary of 2nd Monmouthshire Battalion, 23 and 24 Apr., 1916; See also Dixon, *Out Since 14*, 62–4.

29 Dixon, *Out Since 14*, 65–6.

30 The British Postal Museum and Archive: http://www.postalheritage.org.uk/page/peoplespost-war (accessed 25 May 2014).

31 NM&AG: 96.469:45 and 96.664:2.

32 NM&AG: 96.664:18 and 96.664:38. Maisie met Percy (whom she called Jim) whilst on holiday in Prestatyn.

33 NM&AG: 96.664:7 and 96.664:11.

34 NM&AG: 96.664:4.

his brothers and sister on occasions for not replying and was particularly annoyed that the minister of Caerleon Baptist chapel failed to respond to his letter.[35]

Letters are not necessarily the most informative documents for historians of the First World War, but many soldiers kept war diaries which reveal far more detail. Three diaries have been used in this article to provide more background to Percy's war experiences. They were written by Private Charles Parkinson Heare and Second Lieutenant Hugh Llewellyn Hughes, both from Pontypool, and Company Sergeant Major Cornelius J. Love from Cwmbran. All three were members of the 2nd Monmouthshire Battalion.[36] Only Hughes's diary has the same immediacy as a letter as it was written at the time and the other two are arguably diaries-memoirs. The lack of detail in Percy's letters is unusual and was not due to censorship as is often believed. Many soldiers wrote letters home which contained a great deal of information about their war experiences. Letters were censored to ensure that they did not contain information which would be of use to the enemy, but that still left them a great deal of scope for imparting information about their experiences.[37] Percy obviously practised self-censorship in an attempt to spare his family from the reality of his life on the Western Front, but possibly Percy wrote more openly to his soldier friends. Percy's letters only contain oblique references to the difficulties of fighting on the Western Front. Percy's first dated letter home from France was sent on 11 February 1917 and is longer and more informative than many of the later letters. He tells them to address their letters to '15046 Pte P J Scannell, B Company, 2nd Mon Regt B.E.F. France.' He hopes they are well and reassures them that he is 'pretty well' himself and that he has 'heaps of pals in the 2nd Mons' who 'are out of the 1st Mons' so he was by no means on his own. He is keen to allay his mother's fears stating, 'You wait till after the war is over & I dont think it will be very long now then we will make things fly.' The weather was also of concern to Percy and his family as it had been a cold winter. He tells them, 'We havent had any snow or rain for a very long time now but ever since the last fall of snow it hasn't thawed' but added 'I dont find it half so cold now as we did when we first came out. On the whole things arent so bad now.' He ended his letter, 'Of course I shall come back alright after the war is over you bet. Well cheer up Mother dear & dont be down hearted because, I am not.'[38]

Parcels from home were of great importance to Percy when in Britain, but on the Western Front they were essential for morale and a major concern in his letters.[39] On 24 March he wrote home:

> You always used to tell me it is much better to be born lucky than rich well I agree with you, I had 2 parcels the day before yesterday … The one from Auntie Tilly contained a tin of salmon, 2 tins of tea tablets, a packet of chocolates a lovely cake, about a pound of biscuits & other articles. The other parcel contained a box of 50 Gold Flake, a cake & a box of chocolates. Now what do you think of that good luck.[40]

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35 NM&AG: 96.664:3; 96.664:4; 96.664:9; 96.664.18.

36 Diary of Private C.P. Heare, 2nd Mons Battalion 1914–1918, and the Diary of Second Lieutenant H.L. Hughes of Pontypool, 2nd Mons Battalion, Jan. 1917–Aug. 1917. The diaries are the property of Michael Heare and Miss C. Hughes to whom grateful thanks are due for permission to quote from them; See also the Diary of CSM C.J. Love, *Pontypool Free Press of Monmouthshire*, March–Sept. 1933.

37 See diaries at Imperial War Museum website: http://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/ and Gathering the Jewels: http://education.gtj.org.uk/en/subjects/365 (accessed 21 August 2014.)

38 NM&AG: 96.664:18.

39 NM&AG: 96.664:26.

40 NM&AG: 96.664:6.

It is surprising how much needed to be supplied by a soldier's family and Percy was fortunate that his family were supportive and wealthy enough to do so. The military provided paper money for use overseas, but if in the line, they could not buy food or visit the canteens run by organizations such as the YMCA or visit the local Estaminets.[41] Wine, beer and tobacco were also central to the lives of most European soldiers. 'Fags' were frequently sent to supplement the official ration. Percy often had to borrow paper, or have paper and envelopes sent from home. He also requested a scarf, belt, handkerchiefs, socks, lemonade, pliers and health salts.[42] The latter indicated he was not as much in the 'Pink' as he kept stating. He was particularly concerned about his watch and sent it home to Newport to be mended. He had 'slipped down one day & it stopped, but it had a smart smack'.[43]

It is impossible to know exactly when Percy joined the 2nd Monmouthshire Battalion in France as his first letter from Rouen is undated, but most probably he would have been plunged into the midst of the operations on the River Ancre which took place from January to March 1917. He was obviously there by 4 February as he was receiving letters from home.[44] Although the Battle of the Somme had drawn to a close in the autumn of 1916, the British Army maintained a certain amount of pressure on the German Army around the salient (or bulge) on the River Ancre. Possibly Percy arrived at the front in time for the small scale attack along a stretch of about 1,000 yards of trench in the area of the village of Le Transloy. The operation had been given to the 29th Division, to whom the 2nd Monmouthshire Battalion was attached at the time and took place on 27 January. The action became known as 'The Kaiser's Birthday Raid'. The 2nd Monmouthshire Battalion's role consisted of digging communication trenches before the attack and then following behind the assault troops to ensure supplies reached the advancing army. Percy was placed in B Company which was under the command of Captain A. L. Coppock. They had been ordered to dig a communication trench that night and at 8pm a sergeant and a bomber became casualties. As the attack had not entirely removed the Germans who still held the area at the end of the proposed new trench line, Coppock went back to headquarters for more orders. In the meantime Colonel Bowen appeared, took charge and went over the top and set up a new trench line. With the additional help of D company and ignoring German fire, they finished the job by 4.30am on 28 January. It cost B company ten deaths and seven wounded and Colonel Bowen was awarded a Bar to the DSO he had received in 1915.[45] Private Heare recorded in his diary:

> Our Colonel is the talk everywhere for his coolness. Col Bowen is a good soldier everyone says, our Colonel gets a bar to his DSO he has earned a VC many times over. Always the same no five minute show with him.[46]

Furthermore, the Battalion received recognition from Lord Cavan the corps commander for its work in the Battle of Transloy and it was mentioned in despatches on 1 February 1917.[47]

On the 19 February the 2nd Monmouthshires were sent to the Sailly-Saillisel sector close to Bapaume. For two weeks they were engaged in pioneer work, repairing and draining trenches,

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41 In Nov., 1914, the first YMCA contingent went to France and organised centres at Le Havre. Percy took advantage of one at Rouen.
42 NM&AG: 96.664:3; 96.664:13; 96.664:14; 96.664:18; 96.664:19; 96.664:25.
43 NM&AG: 96.664:5:
44 NM&AG: 96.664:18.
45 War Diary of 2nd Monmouthshire Battalion, 27 Jan., 1917; See also Dixon, *Out Since 14*, 94–8.
46 Diary of Private C.P. Heare, 87.
47 Dixon, *Out Since 14*, 98.

building trench mortar pits and constructing a six foot deep 1,000 yard long telephone cable trench.[48] This was preparation for the raid which began on 28 February. On 2 March, during the continuing Sailly-Saillisel operation, the Commanding Officer of the 2nd Mons, Lieutenant Colonel Bowen, was killed.[49] Second Lieutenant Hughes missed the conflict as he was in hospital recovering from typhus known as trench fever.[50] He recorded in his diary on 4 March, 'news that the CO is killed by sniper on 2nd. A brave man and good soldier, respected through the division' and Sergeant Love also made reference in his diary to Colonel Bowen's work ethic and attention to detail.[51] Percy does not mention his death although he was so well regarded by Percy's battalion, but it is important to bear in mind that Percy's archive is not complete and he might have referred to Bowen's death in another communication. In fact Percy only mentions the deaths of two people in his archive and then only in letters to his sister. This indicates there was a reluctance to emphasise the ever present possibility of death in family letters.[52] Moreover, Bugler George Frederick Chivers's death took place the day after Bowen's, on 3 March 1917, and this was of more immediate importance to Percy. On 10 March only eight days after Bowen's death Percy wrote to his sister, 'Will you please tell Jack Williams, for me, that Bugler Chivers, who lives in Newport, was killed in our company. Jack knew him very well. He was a clerk in the same Office before the war.'[53]

1916 had been an expensive year in terms of men and materials. The German policy was to hold its positions and let the allies wear themselves out by battering themselves against their defences. The German army had chosen their ground carefully, but they knew that sooner or later sufficient colonial forces would be directed at them which could breach their lines. The Germans had drawn up plans to construct a formidable defensive line known as the *Siegfried-Stellung* line, known by the British as the Hindenburg line. They created a defensive zone some 6 to 8,000 yards deep with outposts, deep reinforced concrete dugouts and belts of barbed wire some fifty yards in depth. It stretched from Arras to Vailly-sur-Aisne. The work was completed by the beginning of 1917 and the Germans began their abandonment of their old front line position and had moved back completely by March. The new line was shorter and freed up troops.[54] The German withdrawal caused concern to the allied commanders, as it was where the first joint battle of 1917 had been planned. The British were to attack around Arras while the French were to carry out the major attack and break through further south in the area of the River Aisne. Regardless of the German withdrawal to strengthened lines, the Allies agreed to go ahead with the proposed battle.[55] The 2nd Mons arrived at Arras on 8 April and the battle commenced the following day and a successful creeping barrage meant that the infantry had soon overrun their first objectives and hundreds of prisoners were being escorted to the rear.[56] Second Lieutenant Hughes, in charge of C Company, stated; '9th April (Easter) No Newport v Pontypool game today. Barrage at 5.30. John comes in at 9.0. 1st objective captured. A and B start

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48 *Ibid*.

49 War Diary of 2nd Monmouthshire Battalion, 2 March 1917; see also Dixon, *Out Since 14*, 100–1, and see also 246–69 the edited transcript of the notebooks of Lieutenant Colonel A.J.H. Bowen (Army Book 153 – Field Message Book) for his meticulous instructions; see also Diary of Private C.P. Heare, 87.

50 Typhus was an infection caused by lice.

51 Diary of Second Lieutenant Hughes, 4 March 1917; Diary of CMS C.J. Love. *Pontypool Free Press of Monmouthshire*, 14 July 1933.

52 For Private George Frederick Chivers and Second Lieutenant R.A. Cruickshank see Dixon, *Out Since 14*, 175–6.

53 NM&AG: 96.664:3.

54 Dixon, *Out Since 14*, 104–5.

55 *Ibid*.

56 War Diary of 2nd Monmouthshire Battalion, 8–10 Apr., 1917.

early. We are going soon, wonderful sights, awful wounds, cavalry going over ridge. Armoured cars.'[57]

The 2nd Monmouthshires were engaged on the repair of the main road from Arras to Cambrai, as it had been cut across by multiple trenches and was badly damaged by shelling. By 10 April the road was good enough to allow the British artillery and materials to follow the advancing infantry. The village of Monchy-le-Preux, south-east of Arras, had been an objective on the first day of the battle and it was eventually captured on the 11 April. By 20 April sufficient materials had been brought up to complete the consolidation of the shell damaged trenches. However, Monchy-le-Preux still came under heavy artillery fire as the Germans were not ready to give up this strategically important position. Tanks were also involved in this conflict and the battalion was involved in their rescue.[58] Percy makes only one indirect comment about the conflict, 'Will you please send me a pair of brass flags to wear on my tunic, as the ones I have are cloth, & are all ripped & torn.' However, his cheery comments continue, 'Hope you are all quite well. I am in the pink myself.'[59]

Civilians on the home front had some idea of what trench warfare involved from local newspapers and from talking to soldiers on leave. However, their understanding of the horror of the Western Front was more fully realized after watching the film, *The Battle of the Somme*. It was released in 1916 and had been made on behalf of the British Topical Committee for War Films. A group of independent film producers had lobbied the War Office to allow camera men into the British section of the Western Front and it became a popular success and was viewed by twenty million people.[60] We do not know if Percy's mother saw the film, but his letters prove that she was asking questions and was feeling despondent about what he might be experiencing. He reassured her on several occasions and in June stated, 'you need not change places with me. I am quite happy & contented.'[61] Casualty lists were published in the local papers and one such death was that of Second Lieutenant R.A. Cruickshank from Caerleon which took place on 23 April at the beginning of the Second Battle of the Scarpe. B Company had been allotted the task of digging trenches to new positions under cover of darkness. It was while waiting to commence this task that Second Lieutenant Cruickshank died. Two shells landed in a trench where B Company were waiting and Cruickshank and eleven ordinary ranks were instantly killed.[62] Percy's family had lived near the Cruickshanks. On 24 March Percy had asked his family; 'Do you remember Mr. Cruickshank, who lived on Caerleon Road, a bit further up on the right, than our house. Well one of his sons is in charge of our platoon. He is a 2nd Lieut'.[63] Percy was to refer to him in the past tense in his letter to his sister on 24 May.[64] Following a death it was the commanding officer's duty to write to the family and Colonel Evans wrote a typical letter to his widow emphasising duty, respect, leadership and the deceased's importance to the war effort. Lack of disfigurement was also considered to be a comfort to families, even if untrue, as was the idea of a reverential burial and cross.[65]

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57 Diary of Second Lieutenant H.L. Hughes, 9 Apr., 1917.
58 War Diary of 2nd Monmouthshire Battalion, 10 Apr., 1917; Dixon, *Out Since 14*, 106.
59 NM&AG: 96.664:8.
60 See National Portrait Gallery, 'The Great War in Portraits', 27 February–15 June 2014, http://www.npg.org.uk/whatson/firstworldwarcentenary/curator-tour.php (Accessed 23 May 2014).
61 NM&AG: 96.664:18; 96.664:14.
62 War Diary of 2nd Monmouthshire Battalion, 23 Apr., 1917.
63 NM&AG: 96.664:6.
64 NM&AG: 96.664:10.
65 Dixon, *Out Since 14*, 284–5.

The soldiers became physically and mentally drained and rest periods allowed many to improve their health and sanity before returning to face the horrors of warfare. Although not fighting in the trenches, pioneers often had to march long distances to their work on or near the front line and were subject to shelling or snipers' bullets. Even during breaks from active service men still had to train in methods of warfare such as bayonet fighting and bombing and skills were needed specifically for pioneers, such as digging and repairing trenches.[66] Keeping the men healthy was a major concern. Percy refers briefly to being inoculated in March, which was most probably against typhoid.[67] Second Lieutenant Hughes's diary provides more detail and the men had to undertake a route march to Picquigny to be inoculated and then march back again.[68] Soldiers were inoculated every six months and this took place in Britain and overseas and was enforced by stamping the soldiers' pay books.[69] Cleanliness was essential to morale and health and rest periods allowed communal baths which provided temporary relief and lice-infested clothing was steam-cleaned, but soldiers often developed their own methods such as running a lit cigarette along the seams of their clothes. Trench foot was another problem caused by damp, insanitary, cold conditions and could cause ulcers and gangrene and so men's feet were subject to inspection by officers. Rats also existed in the camps and trenches causing Weil's disease. It was during a rest period that Percy was able to recover from a poisoned thumb. On 8 June he gives a little more information than usual:

> Sorry I haven't written before, but I poisoned my thumb about a fortnight ago & and it is just getting better. In fact I had about a yard of bandage and had to get some chap to write that Field P. C. for me. We are down in rest once again in a very nice village, ever so quiet, such a change. [On 12 June he added] We are on rest at present & we have a fairly decent billet. The weather is as lovely as ever. We had a very pleasant church parade on Sunday & our Divnl [Divisional] Band played the hymns etc. and then played some marches etc. afterwards.[70]

Another poorly understood problem was mental health which encompassed shell shock. There is no evidence in the letters that Percy suffered psychological trauma, but sometimes it did not manifest itself until discharge. Percy only experienced eight months of the war, but the fact that he forgot his mother's birthday worried him a great deal and showed that he was experiencing stress even though he continued to claim he was 'A 1' and 'in the pink'.[71]

It was during a rest period in Méaulte, in March, that the men's numbering altered. Percy's changed from 2985 to 267368 and Private Heare humorously commented in his diary, 'more to carry says the boys'.[72] The aim was to provide numbers that referred to the territorial corps in which soldiers were serving.[73] As the diary of Second Lieutenant Hughes reveals, gambling with cards was a major means of passing the time on the Western Front. Also during rest periods behind the lines, alcohol and French licensed brothels played a part.[74] Naturally, Percy makes no mention of such depravities in letters to his family, but it may be that his strong Baptist upbringing saved

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66 Dixon, *Out Since 14*, 101–2.
67 NM&AG: 96.664:6.
68 Diary of Second Lieutenant H.L.Hughes, 22 March 1917.
69 Diary of Private C.P. Heare, 85 and 86.
70 NM&AG: 96.664:31 and 12.
71 NM&AG: 96.664:14, 22 and 28.
72 NM&AG: 96.664:18; Diary of Private C.P. Heare, 90.
73 The Long Long Trail: http://www.1914–1918.net/renumbering.htm (accessed 29 August 2014).
74 BBC NEWS: 27 Feb. 2014: 'WW1 brothels: Why troops ignored calls to resist 'temptation'', by Dr Clare Makepeace, http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/ukengland-25762151 (accessed 29 August 2014).

Fig. 5: Percy in the 2nd Mons Signal Section: Percy, front row left. © NM&AG: 96.469.33

him from such vices. As usual Percy gives little information in his letters about rest periods and at Méaulte he singled out a church parade and church service which he enjoyed 'immensely'.[75] He does not mention football matches although they were an important part of maintaining morale. On 20 July, shortly before the Third battle of Ypres, when the battalion were at rest at Caribou Camp near Proven, Divisional Boxing Tournaments took place. Once again they are not mentioned by Percy.[76]

When Percy arrived in France he described himself as '2985 Signaller P J Scannell'.[77] Percy was not immediately placed in the 2nd Monmouthshire Battalion signal section, but he did carry out some signaller duties as well as traditional pioneer duties involving manual labour. It was not until

75 NM&AG: 96.664:4.
76 Dixon, *Out Since 14*, 117.
77 NM&AG: 96.664:25.

21 April 1917 that Percy stated, 'I am in the Signal Section permanently now & it is much better'.[78] Photographs show Percy was slight in build and this suggests he did not find pioneer work easy. At the outbreak of war in August 1914 all the British army's intercommunication requirements were met by the Royal Engineers Signal Services, but soon battalions had their own sections. Fig. 5 shows Percy in the 2nd Mons signal section. He was proud to be a signaller once more and sent home a signaller's badge for his brother Bill as a souvenir.[79] Signallers were very important as they allowed information to pass up and down the command chain, but Percy's tasks as a signaller in a pioneer battalion would have been primarily to aid the battalion's communication with the front line unit to which it was attached. A signaller was as likely to be killed as a soldier in the trenches as they often worked near the front line and their job demanded they occupied vantage points which made them more vulnerable. Signallers used flags and the speed at which the operators could send their message depended on the weight of the flags, and a competent operator could reach up to twelve words per minute. Signallers also used mirrors in the day time and Lucas lamps at night which could flash Morse code messages and be read by a man with a telescope. It was always extremely dangerous to transmit towards the front of the battlefield as this would attract enemy fire. Wireless sets were not successful as they were cumbersome and unreliable. Wired telephones were used and a considerable amount of cable was used in the war which was laid by pioneers, but it was constantly being damaged by shell fire and became obsolete due to troop movements.[80]

The Battle of Arras had not been the success that was hoped as the French had not broken through in the south. Haig continued to believe that constant pressure on the German lines was the only way to eventually achieve a breakthrough and end the stalemate of the Western Front. Ypres was the principal town within a salient or bulge in the British lines and had been the site of two previous battles in 1914 and 1915. Haig wanted a British offensive in Flanders and aimed to reach the Belgian coast to destroy the German submarine bases. Furthermore, the possibility of a Russian withdrawal from the war threatened German redeployment from the Eastern Front. In 1917 it was finally agreed to commence the attack near Ypres.[81] The attack was complicated by torrential rain which combined with heavy shelling of the clay soil and turned the battlefield into a quagmire. In order to make any progress across the muddy landscape, duck boards had to be laid and supported on long piles driven into the mud.[82] The 2nd Mons arrived in the rear of Ypres on 19 June where they spent a few days repairing trackways. On 26 June they moved to work around the Yser Canal, laying tracks and repairing roads. Percy's letters provide little indication of the conditions under which the 2nd Mons laboured. Percy merely states on 22 June 1917, 'It has been raining like ___ lately'.[83] By 28 June the 2nd Mons were working on causeways laid across the Yser Canal. They had to be wide and strong enough to carry men and equipment to enable the troops to advance.

The Third Battle of Ypres began on 31 July. The enemy had withdrawn from their front line and so progress on day one was relatively quick, despite heavy shelling. Second Lieutenant Hughes recorded deaths in his company, 'Zero 3.50am. Heavy barrage. No news but prisoners come in. we

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78 NM&AG: 96.664:8.
79 NM&AG: 96.664:9.
80 Royal Signal Museum: http://royalsignalsmuseum.co.uk/WebSite/index.php/displays/2011-11-15-20-18-00/1st-a-2nd-world-wars; See also 'A Signaller in WW1': http://www.worcestershireregiment.com/wr.php?main=inc/signaller_ww1 (both accessed 29 Aug. 2014).
81 Dixon, *Out Since 14*, 113–14.
82 War Diary of 2nd Monmouthshire Battalion, 19–31 June 1917; see also Dixon, *Out Since 14*, 119.
83 NM&AG: 96.664:13.

go up at 2.00 and work on road beyond canal. Shelled all the time. 5 killed Powell and Pickford.'[84] The final stages of the Third Battles of Ypres which became commonly referred to as Passchendaele, became notorious for hardship and horror due to poor weather conditions, mud, incessant shelling, pestilence, rotting bodies and the use of mustard gas.[85] It was to drag on until 10 November, by which time Percy would be one of a large number of dead as this battle saw the greatest loss of life of the various battles on the Western Front. Private Heare recorded, 'This is about the worse of the war, mud everywhere and dead lying in hundreds.'[86] Even between battles there were casualties amongst the 2nd Monnmouthshires as they prepared trackways over the morass which had once been fields beside the Steenbeck. They created duck board tracks and light railway tracks which were found to be the best method of transport over waterlogged ground.[87] As Private Heare commented, 'The ground is worse now like a sea of mud hard work to get about' but he recognized an advantage stating, 'if it wasnt for the mud, there would be more causalities. The shells go so deep in the mud before they explode, it is a common thing to get a shower bath of mud and not hurt otherwise.' He also pointed out that, 'To get up the line now is a bad job, duckboard tracks are laid by night and put on the map. But the German artillery would move them in the morning ....'[88] Not only did they suffer German artillery attacks, but even when out of sight of German lines they were located by observation balloons and there were raids from German planes and gas attacks. Heare described the effect of gas:

> … the shells plop like dud shells, and the wind blows the gas across the canal to our dugouts, we drop the dugout door blanket and use the flaps to beat it off and put our gas masks on but the cursed stuff hangs around and gets in our eyes hours after.[89]

After working in such conditions the pioneers would have to march back to their billets six miles away.

Percy had managed to survive through July whilst working on the Yser Canal and through the Battle of Langemarck which commenced on 16 August. There were four days of fierce fighting which resulted in a small British victory, but a large loss of life. Nevertheless, after the termination of the Battle of Langemarck, pioneers were still being wounded and killed. On 22 August 1917 Percy wrote his last letter which, as usual, casts a veil over the true nature of his war experiences, but the short length and omitted words suggest stress:

> Dear Mother and Dad, Just a few lines to you know I feeling A1 and in the pink. Hope you are all quite well at home. The weather here for the past week has been lovely. How has it been fairing with you. I can't think of anything to write about this time. Hoping to hear from you soon. I remain your loving son.[90]

On 26 August the Battalion was relieved and Percy was heading for Elverdinghe Station to entrain for Proven. It was then that Percy was wounded. The War Diary of the 2nd Monmouthshire Regiment

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84 For the deaths of Lieutenant Corporal Sergeant Powell and Private J.H. Pickford, see Diary of Second Lieutenant Hughes, 31 July 1917; Dixon, *Out Since 14*, 118.

85 Brett, Captain G.A., *A History of the 2nd Battalion, The Monmouthshire Regiment* (Pontypool, 1933), 79.

86 Diary of Private C.P. Heare, 101.

87 Dixon, *Out Since 14*, 119–20.

88 Diary of Private C.P. Heare, 104 and 100. Heare usually used lower-case letters for 'German' or 'Germany'.

89 Diary of Private C.P. Heare, 97.

90 NM&AG: 96.664:22.

Fig. 6: Percy's grave at Bleuet Farm Cemetery © NM&AG: 96.664.36

records that two men from B Company were wounded that day, but only one died of wounds, which must have been Percy.[91] Close to the Elverdinghe station was Bleuet Farm which was used as an Advance Dressing Station from June to December 1917. It was here that Percy was taken and died on 26 August. He was one of 442 British soldiers buried in the cemetery who died during World War One, and was one of seven from the Monmouthshire Regiment.[92] The family received the news of Percy's death in a letter dated 7 September and on 28 December they were told where he was buried, but they were unable to receive a picture of the grave until military action in the area ceased. Eventually, three photographs were sent of the wooden cross which bore the wrong date of death

91 War Diary of 2nd Monmouthshire Battalion, 26 August, 1917 and the casualty lists for August.

92 Commonwealth War Graves Commission: Bleuet Farm Cemetery; http://www.cwgc.org/find-a-cemetery/cemetery/50401/BLEUET%20FARM%20CEMETERY (accessed 23 May 2014).

[See Fig. 6]. On 15 February 1918 Percy's belongings were returned to the family. They included, '2 Identity Discs. Letters. Photos. 1 Leather Photo Case. 1 Wallet. 1 Wrist Watch & Strap. 1 Wrist Disc & Chain. 1 Cigarette Case. 1 Chain with Key attachment. 1 Ring. Cards'.[93] Although his belongings returned home, Percy could not, and one could wish that he had been blessed with the luck of Private Heare, Sergeant Love and Second Lieutenant Hughes who survived the war. Historical analysis tends to overlook the contribution of individual soldiers whose war record often consists only of a name on a war memorial.[94] Percy's letters have formed the basis of this research which enables a greater understanding of his war experiences. Whatever Percy thought privately about the war there is no hint of criticism in his letters. Percy was on the Western Front for approximately eight months and his naturally cheerful disposition seems to have helped him. In fact he was proud to be involved in the war and made suggestions that people at home should join him.[95]

By the time the 50th anniversary of the First World War was commemorated in 1964, the experience of the Second World War meant that many considered the Great War to have been futile. Many modern historians take an opposing view. Military historian Gary Sheffield, to take one example, terms the war 'terrible' but not 'futile'.[96] He regards it as 'a war of national survival, a defensive conflict fought at huge cost against an aggressive enemy bent on achieving hegemony in Europe'.[97] Military historian, John Dixon, has written extensively on the Monmouthshire Regiment. He concentrates on the work the battalions undertook and his books emphasize the heroism and endurance of the soldiers.[98] Although Percy's letters were sanitized to protect his family's feelings, once placed in context, they provide a greater understanding of an individual Territorial soldier's experiences on the Western Front at a time when the centenary anniversary of the First World War makes such archives more meaningful and stimulates fresh analysis.

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93 NM&AG: 96.664:33, 34, 35 and 36.

94 Percy's name is recorded on Newport and Caerleon War Memorials and also on the Caerleon Roll of Honour in the Memorial Room of the Town Hall.

95 Percy suggested Percy Ware should join him overseas. See NM&AG: 96.664:10.

96 Sheffield, Gary, 'Has History misjudged the Generals of World War One?' see www.bbc.co.uk/guides/zq2y87h. See also *The Guardian*, Monday, 17 June 2013 for his views on 'futility'.

97 Sheffield, Gary, 'The Great War was a Just War', *History Today*, Vol. 63 Issue 8 (2013).

98 Dixon, John, *Out Since 14, A history of the ½ Battalion The Monmouthshire Regiment* (Abertillery, 2000); Hughes, Les, and Dixon, John, *Surrender be Damned: History of the 1/1st Battalion the Monmouthshire Regiment, 1914–18*. (Caerphilly, 1995).

COLONEL BRADNEY: A MONMOUTHSHIRE SOLDIER'S GREAT WAR

By David Rimmer

JOSEPH ALFRED BRADNEY (1859–1933)

Joseph Alfred Bradney was one of the most remarkable Monmouthshire men to serve in the Great War (the First World War) 1914–18, serving on the Western Front in 1917–18, despite being 55 years of age when the war began. He was the son of the Revd Joseph Christopher Bradney (1796–1858), rector of Greete, Shropshire, by his second wife, Sarah Decima Jones. Joseph Alfred Bradney married Rosa Jenkins, with whom he had three sons and two daughters – John Harford Bradney (born 1886), Edward Bradney (born 1889), Walter Bradney (born 1892), Margaretta (known as Madge) and Nest.[1] Partly by inheritance and partly by purchase, he acquired an estate in the parish of Llanfihangel-ystern-llewern near Monmouth, building himself a residence there that he called Talycoed.[2]

Military Origins

Bradney took an interest in military affairs from youth. This was, after all, the age of the church militant,[3] so there was no perceived conflict between members of a family being in holy orders on the one hand or belonging to the 'profession of the blood' on the other. Bradney joined the militia in 1879,[4] whilst still an undergraduate at Cambridge.[5] When he was still living with his mother, Sarah Decima Bradney, who was from Ludlow, he transferred as a lieutenant from the Shropshire militia to the Royal Monmouthshire Royal Engineers on 19 April 1881.[6] The reason for his transfer to the Royal Monmouthshire Royal Engineers then, as now, based at Monmouth Castle, must have been proximity, as the 1881 census shows Bradney at Rockfield House.[7] He was promoted captain on 11 January 1882.[8] He resigned in 1892, being appointed by no lesser person than Henry Campbell Bannerman, Secretary for War, by warrant dated 23 April 1892, as lieutenant colonel in charge of the 3rd volunteer battalion, South Wales Borderers.[9] He commanded that battalion which had its headquarters in Pontypool and became honorary colonel. From this point on, the title of colonel is used, as it was his honorary rank and the normal practice was to refer to lieutenant colonels as colonel.[10]

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1 See Bradney, Sir J.A., *A History of Monmouthshire Volume 1 Part 1 The Hundred of Skenfrith* (Mitchell Hughes and Clarke, London, 1907, reprinted by Academy Books, 1991), 129.

2 For an appraisal of Bradney and especially his work as an historian, see Gray, Madeleine (ed.), Bradney, Sir Joseph, *A History of Monmouthshire Volume 5 The Hundred of Newport* (South Wales Record Society, Cardiff and National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth, 1993), vii–xi.

3 Well known examples are: Field Marshall Bernard Montgomery's father was at one stage a colonial bishop; the sons of Herbert Leigh Mallory, George and Trafford joined the army to serve in the Great War. The Leigh Mallory family were squarsons, Herbert having been both rector and lord of the manor of Mobberley, Cheshire.

4 Gwent Archives (hereafter GA), Bradney papers, D554.83.

5 *Cambridge University Alumni, 1260–1900*.

6 Sergeant, R.E., *The Royal Monmouthshire Militia Being A Detailed Description Of The Regiment From The Year 1660 To The Time Of Its Transfer To The Special Reserve* (RUSI, London, 1910), 260.

7 1881 census of Monmouthshire, R.G.115227.

8 Sergeant, *The Royal Monmouthshire Militia*.

9 GA, D554.87.

10 *Ibid*.

Events towards the end of Bradney's time as a battalion commander with the volunteers and territorials, influenced his career in the Great War. One of these events was the passing of the *Territorial and Reserve Forces Act*, 1907, promulgated by Viscount Haldane, Secretary for War as part of a scheme for army reform, spread over several years.[11] An expeditionary force was created, ready for rapid mobilisation. The non-regular and militia volunteers were merged into a single force, known as the Territorials, which would comprise fourteen infantry divisions and fourteen cavalry brigades. The old volunteer corps at public and secondary schools became the Officers' Training Corps (now the Combined Cadet Force), helping to officer the new armies in the Great War. The scheme actually reduced the army estimates by £2,000,000.

Colonel Bradney had brought the 3rd volunteer battalion of the South Wales Borderers to a high state of efficiency and converted it successfully into the Territorial Army, as the 2nd battalion, Monmouthshire Regiment.[12] Following Bradney's retirement on 26 April 1911, he was appointed only two months later, on 22 June 1911, to command a composite battalion from the Western Command for the Coronation of King George V and Queen Mary. A contact made then was a crucial influence on the course of Bradney's wartime career. He was also in charge of a similar formation at the investiture of HRH The Prince of Wales at Caernarvon Castle on 13 July 1911.[13]

A rich source held by Gwent Archives relating to Monmouthshire's part in the preparations for the Great War, is the first quarterly minute book of the *Monmouthshire Territorial Association*, 1912–20.[14] Colonel Bradney attended nearly all quarterly meetings from 25 January 1912 to 15 October 1914 although none thereafter, but he must have acquired up-to-date grounding in all aspects of military administration and practice. Matters covered were the construction, development and funding of drill halls in such places as Cwm, Stow Hill (Newport) and Tredegar and of rifle ranges at Chepstow and Coleford; also mobilisation stores at Risca. Other issues were new methods of training in musketry, to shoot at moving not fixed targets; uniform; supply; and separation allowances.

When war broke out in 1914, Monmouthshire's territorial forces comprised the 1st battalion of the Monmouthshire Regiment, mainly recruited from the south of the county, the 2nd battalion of the Monmouthshire Regiment, mainly from the Eastern Valley and the 3rd battalion of the Monmouthshire Regiment largely from the north of the county. Other formations included the 1st Welsh Field Ambulance Unit based at Ebbw Vale and the 4th Brigade, Royal Field Artillery, based at Newport, Griffithstown and Risca.[15] The photographs of Bradney in about 1911, in camp with his officers (Fig. 1)[16] and at a recruitment rally in Newport with Lord Treowen[17] in August 1914 (Fig. 2), show a man in his fifties, young for his age,[18] able to adapt to war. (He was not the only older man to sign up; another was the writer, H. H. Munro, 1870–1916, who joined the Royal Fusiliers.[19])

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11 Ensor, Sir Robert, *England 1870–1914* (Oxford, 1936), 385–6, 525–6.

12 Brett, Capt. G.A., DSO, MC, The South Wales Borderers (24th Regiment), *A History Of The 2nd Battalion The Monmouthshire Regiment* (Hughes and Son, The Griffin Press, Pontypool, 1933), 30.

13 *Ibid*.

14 Monmouthshire Territorial Association, minute book, 1912–20, GA, D766/1.

15 Strong, Peter, 'The First World War' in Williams, Chris and Croll, Andy (eds), *The Gwent County History Volume 5 The Twentieth Century* (University of Wales Press on behalf of the Gwent County History Association, Cardiff, 2013), 3.

16 Bradney Papers, GA, D554/168.

17 At the time of the photograph, Major General Sir Ivor Herbert, bt, MP.

18 *Who's Who In Newport 1921* (Williams Press, 1921).

19 *Longmans Companion to Twentieth Century Literature* (2nd edn., London, 1975).

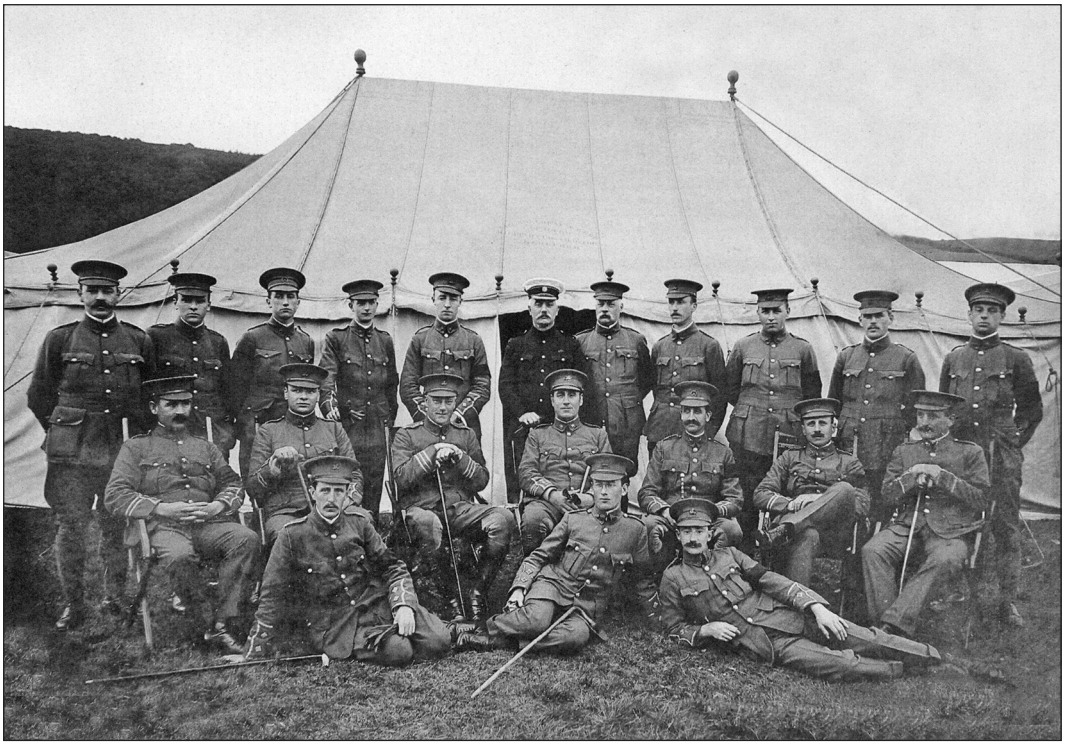

Fig. 1: Colonel Bradney, centre of middle row, sitting, with his officers of the 2nd Monmouthshires, 1911. Source: Gwent Archives, Bradney Papers. Reproduced by kind permission of Gwent Archives.

'Now, God be thanked who has matched us with his hour'[20]

Bradney knew how to 'work his contacts' in county society[21] and on the outbreak of war, was appointed to the staff of the Lord Lieutenant, Sir Ivor Herbert, for recruiting at Newport; Bradney was instrumental in training a large number of such men.[22] As a parting gift from Sir Ivor Herbert, Bradney was appointed Cadet Colonel Commandant under the office of the Lord Lieutenant on 5 December 1915.[23]

Meanwhile, Bradney had left Newport, as in January 1915 he had been given, as a lieutenant colonel, command of the 2nd reserve battalion, Queen Victoria's Rifles (9th London Regiment).[24] He commanded this battalion, serving in London, Tidworth (Surrey) and Fovant (Wiltshire).[25]

Towards the end of this period, Bradney, mainly using his club, Boodles, in St James's, wrote to his military contacts and friends,[26] men such as A.J. Aberg; Brigadier General Hommel; C.J.H.

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20 *Poetry Of The First World War. Longmans English Series*. An anthology selected and edited by Maurice Hussey (6th impression, London, 1978), 53. *I. Peace* by Rupert Brooke, line 1.

21 GA, D554/83.

22 GA, D766/1.

23 GA, D554/87.

24 GA, D554/91.

25 *Ibid*.

26 *Ibid*.

Fig. 2: Sir Ivor Herbert, Lord Lieutenant of Monmouthshire and Colonel Bradney at a recruiting rally in Newport, 31 Aug. 1914. Bradney is on Sir Ivor Herbert's right.
Source: *Who's Who in Newport 1921*.

Marfield and Sir Arthur Latham. This correspondence mainly took place in late 1916, yet little came of it. On 23 December 1916, Aberg commented about a vacancy not being available but 'luckily you have a billet in London to fall back on'. On 8 December 1916, Bradney was offered a place at the Transport Works at Swindon, but on 30 December 1916, Aberg was writing again to the effect that there was no prospect of a vacancy for a lieutenant colonel in Southern Command. A letter of 9 November 1916 may have gone to the heart of the matter: 'Bradney takes a great interest in his battalion if anything he is too kind hearted'.[27] Was it possible that this known virtue of Bradney counted against him being given command of a battalion, where he could be responsible for some of his men going to their deaths? Nevertheless, early in 1917 Bradney proceeded to Flanders.

Passchendaele

The War Office did not permit the keeping of private diaries by serving soldiers, but this did not prevent Colonel Bradney keeping two such diaries both overlapping, and both of them covering the entire period of his active service on the Western Front. The first, referenced at Gwent Archives as D554/91, is a book entitled 'Diary and loose enclosures, Agricultural Officer IX Corps, 11 November 1917 – O[fficer] C[ommanding] 28th Labour Group 21 December 1917'. It ends on 6 May 1918 and is preceded by a collection of loose papers covering the period from 22 May 1912 to 18 March 1920

[27] *Ibid*.

and various artefacts. The second diary, referenced as D554/92 uses a proforma field message book, the first six pages mainly comprising details of establishments and of training courses. The rest of the book is a diary covering the entire period from 5 May 1917 to 28 April 1918. Taken together, the two diaries cover virtually the whole of one year and the time of Bradney's active service on the Western Front.

Bradney landed at Boulogne at 7 pm on 15 May 1917 and reached Poperinghe at noon on 17 May.[28] He then proceeded to Remingholst where he was employed as an area commander[29] being responsible for the logistics, stores and accommodation of those formations in his area, the 23rd, 24th, 25th, 28th, 30th and 41st Divisions. Bradney started studying his papers on arrival at his billet on 21 May: 'a difficult job mine'. An assistant, Lieutenant Smith, was appointed, leaving on 20 June, when Bradney allowed himself the comment: 'work better without him'.[30] His successor, Lieutenant Ibbotson, was more acceptable: 'has been of great help to me in so many details'. When he left on 20 July, Bradney wrote: 'recalled to his unit, I am sorry to lose him.'

There is also an incomplete account in Bradney's diary of the mining of the Messines Ridge.[31] For two years General Sir Herbert Plummer and staff and men of the Second British Army[32] had been working on a plan to blow up the Messines Ridge, the preliminary to the Third Battle of Ypres.[33] The geology of the Ypres Salient presented unique difficulties. There were three levels. The top was a layer of sand or sandy loam; the middle half liquid sand and clay; below was a deep seam of blue clay.[34]

The blowing of the mines took place early on 6 June 1917 and Colonel Bradney's failure to describe this must have been self-censorship, as his diary contains clear accounts of the preliminary bombardments:

> 4 June [1917] bombardment starts.
> 5 June [1917] bombardment more so.
> 6 June [1917] bombardment awful noise, the last 3 or 4 days, a few shells were dropped by the Hun in this village and we changed our men to a tent near this office.
> 7 June [1917] 4 a.m. the assault commenced. The Hun offered a feeble resistance and the objective was quickly gained. The 24th Division then carried on the work and soon completed it.[35]

Bradney later described the consequences of this assault, the description demonstrating his love of historic architecture combined with sadness about the images of devastation, death and of the defacing of the countryside.

> 11 June 1917. Smith and I rode up to see the ground on which the battle had taken place. At the chateau, just before getting to Vermezele, we dismounted. This chateau was a beautiful place, once a residence of the King of the Belgians, surrounded by a moat. It is now a ruin having been destroyed by German shellfire.

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28 *Ibid*.
29 Bradney Papers, GA, D554/92.
30 GA, D554/91.
31 GA, D554/92.
32 Taylor, A. J. P., *The First World War. An Illustrated History* (Penguin Books, London, 1966), 189.
33 Warner, Philip, *Passchendaele* (Wordsworth Editions Limited, 1999), 29.
34 *Ibid*.
35 GA, D554/92.

This account is followed by a description of the structures shattered by British bombardment and of the dead Germans.

> Saw one German corps (sic) and pieces of legs sticking out of boots, etc. The crater that was blown up by mining was an immense hole[36] as big as a large quarry, once fertile cultivated land and now a desert region to cultivate again.[37]

Social life on the Western Front on the quiet sectors was a mixture of boredom and discomfort; most working class soldiers found living conditions little worse than in peacetime, many enjoying better medical facilities and diet than they had experienced as civilians.[38] This quality of life is confirmed for the period of the Third Battle of Ypres.[39] Joseph Bradney was regularly visited by his eldest son, John Harford Bradney, who he called 'Jack', a staff officer, GS03.[40] Bradney saw his third and youngest son less often. Walter was a second lieutenant in the 10th [Rhondda] battalion of the Royal Tank Corps. On 29 May, father met son and his tank, 'a fearful monster' at Ouiderdon. They met again on 3 June and all three, Joseph, Jack and Walter met in camp on 12 July 1917. Joseph Bradney commented that Jack and Walter had not met for eight years,[41] a consequence of the boarding and public school education received by the Bradney children, causing them to be split up from an early age.

Colonel Bradney's life was not limited to his sons. A clubbable man, he found time to socialise with his comrades. On 23 August 1917, he messed with Lieutenant Colonel Rogers, whom he had first met as an adjutant to a composite battalion, which Bradney had commanded at the Coronation of King George V in 1911.[42] By now Rogers was Provost Marshall to the Second Army of which Bradney was a member. The matter was taken further forward on 25 August, when the two had tea together: 'he's trying to get me a job with a labour battalion.'[43] The next day Bradney was interviewed at the headquarters of the Fifth Army, by Colonel Gordon, assistant director of labour, for a position to command a labour group in the Second Army. This meeting was, in effect, an exploration of prospects.[44]

Another social connection had local links:[45]

> The brigade major whose name is Lee, whose father used to live at the Priory, Caerleon & whose grandfather worked on the Roman remains. A spectacled boy from Oxford with radical tendencies held forth on divine subjects.

Joseph Bradney's campaign to get command of a labour group took another step forward when he saw a General Gibbs on 30 September 1917 to discuss his suitability for command of a labour group.

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36 *Ibid*.

37 Warner, *Passchendaele*, 51. The largest of these craters (now a pool) is at Spanbroekmolen between Wytschaete and Messines, near to the Lone Tree Cemetery. The crater, called the Pool of Peace, is now owned by Toc H, being two hundred and fifty yards wide and forty feet deep.

38 Barnett, Corelli, *The Great War* (BBC, London, 2003), 151–2.

39 GA, D554/ 91.

40 GA, D554/ 92.

41 *Ibid*.

42 GA, D554/90. Ceremonies of Investiture of the Prince of Wales, 13 July 1911 and the Coronation of King George V, 22 and 23 July 1911. Orders of Colonel J. A. Bradney, to 'D' Welsh Composite Battalion, 29 June 1911.

43 GA, D554/92.

44 *Ibid*.

45 *Ibid*.

Not all relationships were positive; there could be snobbishness and the 'pulling of rank'. Bradney spoke to Colonel Leatham, son of the vicar of Penrhos in his car on 23 September 1917: 'never saw him nor did he ask me to dinner'. There had been problems over tents at the Micmac Camp on 9 October, as the 23rd brigade was appropriating them. Colonel Bradney went to Abeille, where he had an 'unpleasant interview' with Brigadier General Legge, the deputy adjutant and quartermaster general.[46]

Bradney visited the small Flemish town of Poperinghe seldom, although he went there on 26 August 1917.[47] The place was almost entirely given up to the entertainment of soldiers.[48] Its most edifying institution was Talbot House, whose first warden was the Reverend Phillip (Tubby) Clayton, Toc being the phonetic term for 'T' in the Great War. It was an everyman's club, a haven of peace and security for half a million soldiers during the war.[49] Less edifying were the *estaminets* which provided the 'tommies' with a menu of egg, chips and women in a varying order of priority. There were also cafés, which provided comparable facilities for officers, but these were out of bounds to other ranks.[50]

The progress of the Third Battle of Ypres, known to posterity as Passchendaele was determined by the geology of the Ypres salient and the weather. It had started with promise, but the preliminary bombardment had wrecked the drainage systems and from 1 to 13 August, it rained continuously, turning the ground into a sea of mud. Detailed accounts of the various offensives from August to November 1917, are to be found in the relevant chapters of Philip Warner's book *Passchendaele*.[51] The descriptions in Bradney's field message book are far briefer: 14 June 1917: 'small attack, 7.30 a.m.'; 29 September 1917: '3 a.m. great battle, advance all along line, bombardment'; 4 October 1917: 'early a.m., violent cannonading went on at night, various attacks by our troops'; 'early a.m., another great battle, little rain, no bombs on us, good objectives taken, prisoners 200–300, passed to cage.'[52]

German attacks are described in more detail because in modern warfare, which happens at long range, the effects of German attacks on the British are clearly evident at close range, but damage and casualties inflicted on the Germans would not be closely observed, an example of the fog of war.

An early example of a graphic description of the horror of war is: '9 June 1917 … Camp commandant went out to see what was to be seen and got caught by a shell.' Bradney's account includes the discomforts of war: '1 August 1917. It rained all Tuesday night & the battle in consequence is deplorable. The soldiers are on newly taken ground with no trenches and only shell holes full of water to shelter in.'[53] The descriptions of the effects of German shellfire are quite detailed. For example on 24 July 1917: 'A shell dropped into their stables, killed his best horse. Odd that no others hurt.' 20 September 1917: 'This night at 10 o'clock several shells were dropped near my hut at 4.30 a.m., three were dropped a few yards away, but not much damage done.'

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46 This camp must have had links with Canada, as the Micmacs are a tribe of Canadian Native Americans.
47 GA, D554/92.
48 Warner, *Passchendaele*, 214.
49 *Ibid*., 28.
50 *Ibid*., 215.
51 *Ibid*., 53–168.
52 GA. D552/92.
53 *Ibid*.

A new factor in warfare during the Third Battle of Ypres was large-scale aerial bombardment. The main agent, the German Gotha G.V. heavy bomber, was brought into service in 1917[54] and many of the attacks which affected Bradney were air raids. An early air raid took place on 18 August 1917, when German aeroplanes came over: '… dropped bombs killing officers and men in Remingholst on the 23rd of August. Two other bombs on the artillery lines 4 men and 22 horses killed', and on 20 September 1917: 'this evening several bombs were dropped by enemy planes close by here, which [enemy aircraft] were eventually driven off by our airmen'.[55]

One advantage which British officers and men serving on the Western Front in the Great War had over their Second World War successors was that it was relatively easy to get back to 'Blighty', just the other side of the Channel. In 1917, those Bradneys serving on the Western Front sometimes availed themselves of the facility of returning to 'Blighty'. By 3 September 1917, John Harford Bradney, was in hospital in London on sick leave, as his father visited him in Millbank Hospital. John (Jack) Harford Bradney seems to have had the easiest time, although when he saw his father on 24 September, he was 'put out' as his post had been filled by order of GHQ.[56] Walter Bradney, the youngest son, a serious soldier, went home on leave on 22 August, due to a crushed hand,[57] an injury only too easy to sustain in the early 'lozenge shaped' British tanks. The reason for his leave was later given in a card sent by Walter from Lady Pembroke's house at Wilton [Wiltshire].

Joseph Bradney's own leave, granted on 29 August 1917, was through no illness or injury of his own, but mainly due to his concern about what turned out to be the incipient mental illness of Rosa, his wife. He stayed with his daughters, Nest and Madge (Margaretta), one night in a London hotel, commenting on 1 and 3 September, that 'Rosa was better but not right'.[58] He then devoted his remaining leave to other matters including a meeting with Williams and Tweedy of Monmouth, his solicitors, on the redemption of a mortgage. He was also at Monmouth Castle, meeting his fellow landowner, Forestier Walker, on 4 September.[59] Bradney also met a Mr Johnson at Treadam, where they probably discussed estate management as Johnson may have been Bradney's bailiff. Bradney returned to London, dining with Jack at his club, Boodles, on 7 September, then meeting Madge at the Grosvenor Court Hotel on 8 September, where he stayed, returning to France on 11 September 1917.[60]

The final issue to be discussed concerns Joseph Bradney's mode of travel when on active service in France. He rode in France and was an accomplished horseman. An example of his riding on active service was on 24 July 1917, when he borrowed a horse from the Traffic Control office.[61] However, he was '… sent by car to HQ 5th Army to see the general as to my suitability for control of a labour group'.[62] Bradney was one of that generation too old to drive, because he would have been in

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54 For Gotha G.V. heavy bomber (1917), see http://www.militaryfactory.com/aircraft/detail.asp?aircraft-id-829, 10 Sept. 2014.

55 GA, D554/92.

56 Jack Bradney seems to have been a delightful chap. As a staff officer during the time of Passchendaele, he was able to meet his father no fewer than eleven times.

57 GA, D554/92. This card was received by Joseph Bradney on 30 Sept. 1917.

58 *Ibid*.

59 Charmley, Gerard, 'Parliamentary Representation' in Williams, C. and Croll, A. (eds), *The Gwent County History Volume 5 The Twentieth Century* (The University of Wales Press on behalf of the Gwent County History Association, Cardiff, 2013), 302. Forestier Walker was not elected MP for Monmouth until the 'Coupon Election' of 1918. He and Bradney could have been discussing politics (both were Conservatives), military matters, or as landowners, other common interests.

60 GA. D554/92.

61 *Ibid*.

62 *Ibid*.

his forties when efficient motor cars became available. The forms of words used in his diaries suggest that Bradney travelled as a passenger in the back seat of a staff car or was driven in a motor lorry.[63]

The Third Battle of Ypres ended in the fighting around Passchendaele in the late autumn of 1917, at which point in time Bradney's military career took an unexpected turn.

Agricultural Officer

Joseph Bradney's involvement in the work of an agricultural officer started almost casually when he dined with two officers employed in this work on 15 October 1917.[64] They were responsible for placing soldiers with French farmers to help them. Bradney found both of them, Major Hughes, a Canadian officer and 'Moness' a Frenchman from Algiers, interesting. There was no more mention of the matter until 26 October, when Brigadier Cook, deputy assistant adjutant and quartermaster general of IX Corps, mentioned that the agricultural officer was to go to the rear. On 30 October, news came through that a Colonel Bouverie had been appointed agricultural officer. He arrived the following day, but was removed on 2 November: 'he is too feeble and knows nothing about farming'. On 3 November, Bradney commented that he 'might have been put in Bouverie's place but no such luck. It is seldom in the Army a man gets a job for which he is suited. Strang has been given the job who probably knows nothing about it.'[65]

Nevertheless, the Brigadier of the 41st Brigade came round for tea on 7 November and on 10 November, Bradney was informed of his *de facto* appointment in place of Major Hughes, taking over his new work the next day. He was still an area commander, holding his original post until 24 November.[66] Bradney worked with a French manager, a Mr Monod, and most of the farms were in the Meteren and Fletre communes close to the Belgian frontier, examples being: Delbecq, Godwaersodde and Tredelle. Most of the work entailed rural journeys to make visits, so Bradney and Monod rode. Occasionally they walked, as on 16 November when they visited Ballieul, the nearest small town.[67] His duties were various including the inspection of a threshing machine and a chicory farm (one employee only),[68] attending to an injured French soldier and the planting of vegetables.[69]

Joseph Bradney's work as an agricultural officer was an interlude, a time out of war, but a family crisis brought about change. Rosa Bradney's mental health had deteriorated alarmingly and the diary entry for 16 November 1917 reads: 'Very bad news of Rosa, who has taken to writing dreadful letters to people'.[70]

Having been given special leave on compassionate grounds,[71] Bradney went by corps car to Boulogne on 1 December and met Madge in England next day. They went straight to the mental

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63 There is no way of proving this matter conclusively, as driving licences were introduced under the terms of the *Road Traffic Act*, 1935, two years after Joseph Bradney's death.

64 GA, D554/91.

65 Bradney's bitterness is understandable, as he was a landowner with many years' experience. The Army may have had more acceptable views at that time about Bradney's future employment, of which he (Bradney) was ignorant.

66 GA, D554/91.

67 *Ibid*.

68 A plant, its root being ground and roasted as an additive or substitute for coffee, or in the preparation of salads. Most comments from those to whom the author has spoken have been unfavourable. There is still a niche market for Camp Coffee, so it could be a case of *degustibus non disputandum est*. See *The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 3rd edn., 1968).

69 GA, D554/91.

70 GA, D554/92.

71 GA, D554/91.

hospital at Roehampton Priory near London and '... saw poor Rosa. A very nice place. She was as full of delusions as ever'.[72] On 4 December, Bradney dined with Willie Trollope, Steven Scrope and Sir Henry Woodhouse, returning to Roehampton Priory on 5 December, meeting Walter his youngest son, who was on leave after discharge from hospital, on 6 December. Next, he returned to Monmouthshire meeting Adamson, Mr Tweedy's clerk. On 9 December, Bradney had tea at Llantilio Crossenny; supper with a Mr Powell and went to Raglan the next day. On 11 December, he returned to London, going to Roehampton with a Mrs Lister and dining at Boodles with Charlie Bathurst. On 15 December, Madge went to Roehampton with him but did not see her mother.

Rosa Bradney had been 'taken off on Monday the 19th [of November] and was now at Roehampton Priory. She had come so bad there was nothing else to be done and Sir Henry [Mather] Jackson, has acted as a good friend in arranging matters'.[73] Rosa had slipped into a shadowland of mental illness, where she remained until her death in February 1927.[74]

Every effort has been sought to avoid making value judgements, but Bradney could not have been happy on his return to France. He had no permanent employment as an agricultural officer and far worse had lost his wife to mental illness. For Bradney, though, there was 'balm in Gilead'. On his return to his base at Meteren, a letter awaited him, offering him command of a labour group.[75]

The Labour Group

Although the French had agreed to supply manual labour, this did not happen and by November 1916, a heterogeneous mixture of labour units had come into existence: eleven Royal Engineers labour battalions; thirty infantry labour battalions; the Cape Coloured Labour Battalion; two South African Labour Corps battalions; eight non-combatant corps companies; twenty-nine Army Service Corps labour companies; one Canadian Forestry Company; two battalions of the British West Indies Regiment; the Bermuda Royal Garrison Artillery; and forty-seven prisoner of war companies.[76]

Special mention must be made of the Chinese labour corps; some of their companies came under Bradney's command and they displayed coolness in action. Recruited from the tough peasantry of Shantung province in northern China and being assembled in the British concession of Wei-hai-Wei, they were given basic military training and organised under thirty-two gang masters in companies of 500 men, with one interpreter clerk to each company. Their journey to the Western Front, including the crossing of Canada, took four months. Each Chinese labourer was paid one franc daily; their families in China were paid £1 a month in Mexican dollars.[77]

By 1917, the British forces on the Western Front comprised five armies. This great force needed a better organised structure for labour, than the mixture described above. In 1917, therefore, the War Office by Royal Warrant created a single organisation, the Labour Corps, for the more flexible use of men and to simplify administration. Most infantry and labour battalions and companies were formed into labour companies. Battalion headquarters became labour group headquarters, which controlled a variable number of companies. Finally, the many cap badges were replaced by a single unsatisfactory anonymous Services Corps cap badge. It was not until the autumn of 1918, that the

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72 GA, D554/92.
73 *Ibid*.
74 Gray, Madeleine (ed.), Sir Joseph Bradney, *A History of Monmouthshire Volume 5 The Hundred of Newport* (South Wales Record Society and National Library of Wales, 1993).
75 GA, D554/91.
76 Messenger, Charles, *Call-To-Arms. The British Army, 1914–1918* (London, 2005), ch. 7, 'Labour', 214.
77 *Ibid*., 229–30.

Labour Corps received its own cap badge of a rifle, pick and shovel bound together with a laurel leaf with the motto *Labor Omnia Vincit* (Work conquers all).[78]

In the week before Christmas Day 1917, Colonel Bradney undertook an induction programme. On 17 December, he rode to the headquarters of the IX Corps to accept command of the 28th Labour Group from General Cooke. The next day he went by car to the Second Army headquarters at Hesdin to meet Colonel Ware, the director of labour[79] and Colonel Sir Henry Verney and was made comfortable at the labour mess.[80] Bradney started on his paperwork on 19 December, staying at the Hotel de France, proceeding to the headquarters of his new command at Ypres on 20 December, inspecting the 72nd, 85th and 86th companies which he followed with inspections of the 41st and 43rd companies. He met Captain Lindsay,[81] the deputy assistant director of labour on 22 December, visiting with his adjutant, the 13th, 17th and 171st companies the next day. On Christmas Eve, he visited the 66th company with Captain Lindsay, familiarising himself with his new command and duties with vigour and keenness.

The Christmas of 1917 was described well by Bradney. It was, apart from being on the Western Front, almost a Christmas of childhood imaginations. Snow fell on Christmas Eve and on Christmas Day: 'Group dinner, me, adjutant, doctor and twenty three others. Snow fell, went to church ... bitter cold weather.' The menu for Christmas dinner has survived and is quoted verbatim, although the original French has been translated into English:

> 28 Labour Group HQ,
> Christmas 1917
> In The Field.
>
> Menu
> Victory Soup
> Poultry
> Roast chicken with ham
> Wilson tongue
> Boiled potatoes
> Joint
> Roast beef
> Baked potatoes
> Cabbage
> Sweet course
> Christmas pudding
> Lloyd George sauce
> Bread and cheese
> Dessert
> Jerusalem port
> Rhondda Beer
> Cigars and cigarettes[82]

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78 *Ibid*., 232.
79 GA, D554/91.
80 GA, D554/92.
81 GA. D554/91.
82 *Ibid*.

Fig. 3: Men of infantry labour battalion, later part of Labour Corps, working on road repairs.
Source: Messenger, C., Call-To-Arms. The British Army, 1914–18 (London, 2005).

This picture of Flanders, reminiscent of Bruegel, has to be left behind as the bread and butter work of the 28th Labour Group is examined. The menu makes a point: these officers eat well, as did the other ranks of the army all year round; The 'U' boat campaign caused a scare,[83] but the British naval blockade with German planning errors brought the German Army and people to starvation, a prime cause of Germany's defeat. [84]

Colonel Bradney had wide responsibilities, as the 28th Labour Group was a loose co-ordinating agency; between 26 December 1917 and 20 March 1918, some forty-four companies,[85] seven of which were Chinese, fell within his remit. The units did their work and moved on. Apart from the usual routine duties, tasks included erection of cages for Chinese labourers and German prisoners; road building; and making gun emplacements (Fig. 3).[86]

He had a duty of care to all of his men and was always visiting and inspecting his labour companies, a 'roving' remit. He often had his medical officer with him as an early reference on 21 December 1917, is to a 'good doctor, Walker, a Scotsman.' Hygiene was a major concern, especially for the kitchens and water supply.[87] The Chinese were generally concerned about cleanliness and on

83 Taylor, *The First World War. An Illustrated History*, 189.
84 Strachan, Hew, *The First World War* (London, 2014), 207–15.
85 GA, D554/91.
86 GA, D554/92.
87 *Ibid*.

22 January 1918, there was a dispute 'about water for the Chinese.' However, on visiting the Chinese camp at Baignecourt 'the difficulties over food and water for the Chinese were not settled'.[88] The war was low key throughout the winter of 1917 to 1918, with some elements of comfort. On 31 December 1917, Bradney 'Slept in a v[ery] comfortable [billet], scarcely hear guns'[89] and on 15 February 1918, 'six bombs fell at Nesle and nearby'.[90] On 28 February, Headquarters ordered a 'battle stations standby'. The winter remained very cold throughout, with snow on 8 January 1918 and a west wind on 4 March. Some of the positions occupied by Bradney and his men were dangerous like 'Salvation Corner', so-called due to the number of men who died there.[91] Bradney refers to 32 Company occupying a 'dangerous and bleak spot, subject to shells, bombs, etc'.[92] With his transfer to the Labour Corps, Bradney's 28th Labour Group became part of the British Fifth Army and he met Colonel Gordon, its assistant director of labour, on 30 January 1918.[93] Bradney's area covered villages such as Ham, St Simon, Nesle and Roye. All normal work continued until 20 March, but on 21 March, Colonel Bradney received the order, 'man battle stations'.

Operation Michael (Fig. 4)

Operation Michael and the subsequent German offensives of the spring and summer of 1918 reintroduced mobility to the battlefield. Colonel Bradney participated in this operation which started a revolution in warfare and has caused debate amongst historians ever since. Winston Churchill was the first to write on this subject.[94] He is clear and his account is sound as he was an experienced soldier, minister of munitions and present in person. However, there were drawbacks. As a high level participant, he had inherent bias. Roy Jenkins describes Churchill's history of the Great War, *The World Crisis*, as a *pièce justificaire*.[95] Churchill described the spring and summer offensives, German planning, British prior knowledge and the 'weight and intensity of the bombardments'.

A.J.P. Taylor stated that 'There was to be no preliminary bombardment'.[96] Other historians, Corelli Barnett[97] and Hew Strachan,[98] confirm that there was to be a 'bombardment on 21 March 1918 lasting only four hours, its aim being to stun and suppress, not to destroy and above all not to forfeit surprise'.[99]

Taylor was right about German infantry tactics: 'light forces were to go forward, finding weak spots instead of massed infantry breaking themselves against strong ones'.[100] Hew Strachan explains that '... The roots of the tactics of 1918 went back even further to 1915, and Willy Rohr's first storm troops'. By 1918, squads of seven to ten storm troops were trained to bypass strong points, keeping up momentum, by seeking out soft spots and supporting troops would mop up. These were *stoss* or shock divisions.[101]

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88 *Ibid*.
89 *Ibid*.
90 GA, D554/91.
91 GA, D554/87.
92 GA, D554/91.
93 *Ibid*.
94 Churchill, Winston, *The World Crisis, 1911–1918*, Vol. II (London, 1938).
95 Jenkins, Roy, *Churchill* (London, 2001), 262–3.
96 Taylor, *The First World War. An Illustrated History*, 215.
97 Barnett, *The Great War*, 169.
98 Strachan, *The First World War*, 287.
99 *Ibid*.
100 Taylor, *The First World War. An Illustrated History*, 215.
101 Strachan, *The First World War*, 287.

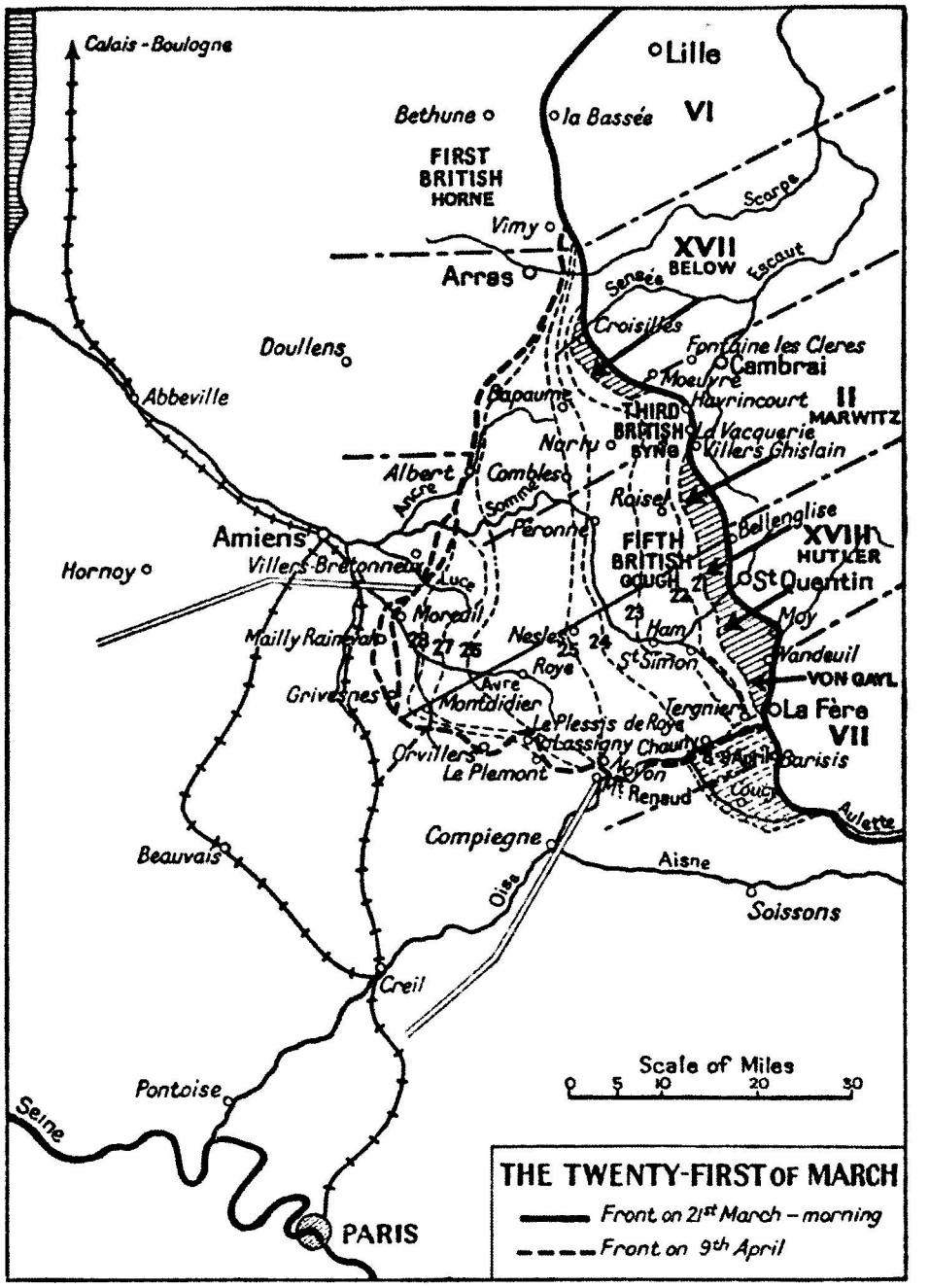

Fig. 4: Map of the Western Front at the time of Operation Michael, 21 March (morning)–9 April [1918].
Source: Churchill, Winston S., The World Crisis, 1911–1918. Volume II (London, 1938).

Most of the photographs in *German Assault Troops of World War I* are of young *stoss* troops, taken singly or in small groups in studios or in the trenches. They were mostly armed with four 'stick' grenades kept in their belts with Gew 98 (Mauser) rifles, slung over their shoulders.[102] These were 'traditional' weapons and A.J.P. Taylor's statement that the Germans had no new weapons with which to mount an assault was partly true.[103] The German Army had introduced in time for the 1918 offensives, a range of portable infantry weapons. A BBC series based on Strachan's book *The First World War*, included an episode entitled 'Germany's Last Gamble' which was shown on BBC4 on 15 April 2014. A sequence of archive film used shows an advancing *stosstrup*, one of whom was carrying a portable machine gun identified as a Woolf water-cooled light machine gun.[104] The infantry gun, calibre 76.2mm, mark L/16.5 could be carried in parts and assembled as needed.[105] The flame thrower in use at the time of Operation Michael was the Wex, a small ring-shaped weapon, easy to carry.[106] Lack of petrol-driven vehicles made it difficult for the Germans to sustain an offensive for any length of time.

Before considering Colonel Bradney's involvement in Operation Michael, two points must be made. All historians agree, 'In the early hours of March the 21st, a dense fog crept up enveloping the entire front'.[107] 'The sun rose at 6 a.m., but the fog still lay thick on low ground, blinding the defence'.[108] The British knew an attack was expected. On 18 March, three days before the launch date of the attack, allied intelligence calculated that the German Army in the west was thirty-seven divisions stronger than in November 1917.[109]

Bradney had also been given notice to 'man battle stations' on 21 March 1918. The next day, 22 March, he fulfilled his duty of care to his men, warning all of them to proceed to destinations ordered; all got away safely.[110] Bradney's skill as a horseman served him well, as he rode with Colonel Reid and they slept at Nesle on the evening of 23 March. His diary entry for the 24 March is a graphic account of the face of defeat:

> Proceeded to Roye and slept there. I shall never forget the state of affairs, every road crowded with refugees and our transport getting away; steam rollers, ploughs by the hundred, labour companies etc. etc., a tragic sight (Fig. 5).[111]

Bradney and Reid then rode to Moseille and left at 6.30 p.m. arriving at the next town at 1.30 a.m.. There was no place to sleep.[112] Here Bradney must have been referring to 25 March, but was losing his sense of time due to the pressure of events and sleep deprivation. On 26 March, Bradney commented that he 'had a good bed in a good house.' On 27 March, his comrade Colonel Reid left at 1.30 p.m.[113] At the end of the day, Bradney once again slept in a bed and also slept in a bed on

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102 Wictor, Thomas, *German Assault Troops of World War I* (Pennsylvania, USA, 2012), 256–9.
103 Taylor, *The First World War. An Illustrated History*, 215.
104 Information *ex* Imperial War Museum.
105 Wictor, *German Assault Troops of World War I*, 271.
106 *Ibid*., 290.
107 Cowley, Robert, *1918. Gamble for Victory. The Greatest Offensive of World War I* (New York, 1964), 14.
108 *Ibid*., 169.
109 *Ibid*., 167. The treaties of Brest Litovsk ended the war in the east and following a period of planning, from Nov 1917, forces of 47 attack divisions, 6,000 guns and 28 trench divisions were deployed for attack on the Western Front.
110 GA, D554/92.
111 *Ibid*.
112 GA, D554/91.
113 *Ibid*.

Fig. 5: Holt caterpillar tractor towing a six-inch gun, the sort of heavy equipment which blocked the main roads in the British retreat during Operation Michael, 21 March–9 April 1918.
CIWM Q 31595. © IWM

28 March. The first evidence that the situation was stabilising came on 29 March, when Colonel Yates, the labour commandant of VIII Corps came over to see Bradney and he travelled with the headquarters group to Croseilles. Despite more evidence of normality, the situation was not yet under control:

> I rode in a lorry via Amiens which is being deserted by the inhabitants, had a comfortable bed. The motor car turned up, the driver having had many adventures.[114]

Bradney asked to go to Beauvais, but instead the decision was taken to stay overnight at Bertangles on 31 March, then he stayed at Canaples proceeding to Terramesnil by motor car on the 2 April.

Colonel Bradney visited the 146th and 132nd companies at work at the camp of the 146th company, the following day inspecting the 135th, 143rd, 144th and 146th companies at work. On 4 April, Bradney travelled to Domquer with the doctor in his ambulance. On 5 April, Bradney went to St. Riquier to find out if the 2nd Corps of Chinese labourers had arrived in the afternoon and then went with the doctor to meet Colonel Gordon, the labour commandant of the advanced headquarters of the reserve army.[115] Brigadier General Stuart in charge of work on the trenches, called in at the

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114 GA, D554/92.
115 *Ibid*.

headquarters of the 28th labour group on 6 April. Bradney inspected the 108th Chinese company at Canaples on 7 April and motored to Faviere the next day to see the adjutant of the Royal Engineers over the selection of a site for a Chinese camp near the Somme.[116] The same day, Joseph Bradney settled for a few days at Abbeville[117] where he carried out administration and received a move order, travelling to Oisisy, where his accommodation was very bad. On 14 April, Bradney was visited by Colonel Lord Henry Scott, labour commandant of the VII corps, who informed him that he was too old to serve and that he should soon receive official notification to this effect.[118]

What happened to Walter Bradney formed part of the sequence of events which followed the German attack of 21 March, although Joseph Bradney did not know of his youngest son's death until 16 April 1918,[119] when he was told by John Harford Bradney, his eldest son. He was formally notified on:

> 19 April [19]18. Feel most depressed and full of sorrow. A letter from Jack enclosing a telegram from Madge [Fig. 6] saying that Walter is missing since 24 March. I am much upset.[120]

The only photographic image of Walter Bradney in uniform which survives is of an innocent young man (Fig. 7). Joining the Royal Tank Corps, he must have been a dedicated and very brave young soldier. To serve in an early 'lozenge shaped' Mark I to Mark V British tank was to dice with death. The photograph of a 'knocked out' British tank, selected for this article, shows that the Germans soon learned how to destroy these vehicles by using cannon fire (Fig. 8). There would have been no survivors from this tank. The same would have been true of Walter's tank. When interviewed by the *Cardiff Weekly Mail*, in connection with his award of knighthood in January 1924, Joseph Bradney stated that 'he (Walter) was blown up in his tank and the whole crew killed.'[121] The date of death of Second Lieutenant Walter Bradney of the [Royal] Tank Corps, is confirmed in the faculty granted for his memorial tablet in Llanfihangel-ystern-llewern Church in Monmmouthshire: 24 March 1918.[122] Walter's experiences in the Royal Tank Corps would not have been pleasant, however excellent his comrades. The first generation of British tanks were cumbersome, unwieldy, slow (three to four miles an hour maximum), cramped, hot and difficult to steer, enter and exit.[123]

Two final factors must be briefly considered before going on to the next part and are as follows. Operation Michael ended on 9 April 1918 without taking Amiens. The map in volume II of *The World Crisis* by Winston Churchill shows that the Germans also failed to cut the railway links to this key British route centre. German casualties were high. It was the first of a series of stalled

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116 Michelin Local Map 301. Pas-de-Calais, Somme, scale 1:150,000–1 inch, shows the site for the Cimitiere Chinois, as being south-east of Faviere near the estuary of the Somme.

117 The route taken by Bradney and his party for travelling from Amiens to Abbeville was a model of good sense. Main roads such as the D936, D901, RN25 and D925, likely to be packed with refugees and heavy plant, were avoided. Side roads were used, and the party stayed in villages such as: Bertangles, Canaples, Terramesnil, Domquer and Benaville, these places being used for sleeping.

118 GA, D554/92.

119 *Ibid*.

120 The War Office procedure concerning 'I regret to inform you' telegrams was always to send them to the home address, as the location of members of a family serving with the army might be uncertain to a military bureaucracy, but known at home. Margaretta (Madge) Bradney was the only member of the family at Tal-y-Coed. John Harford (Jack) Bradney, being a staff officer, would have been the easiest to contact.

121 GA, D554/87.

122 GA, D554/110.

123 See Warner, *Passchendaele*, 82–4, for a description of working in early tanks by Captain D. Hickey.

Fig. 6: Margaretta (Madge) Bradney, Colonel Bradney's elder daughter.
Source: Gwent Archives, Bradney Papers.
Reproduced by kind permission of Gwent Archives.

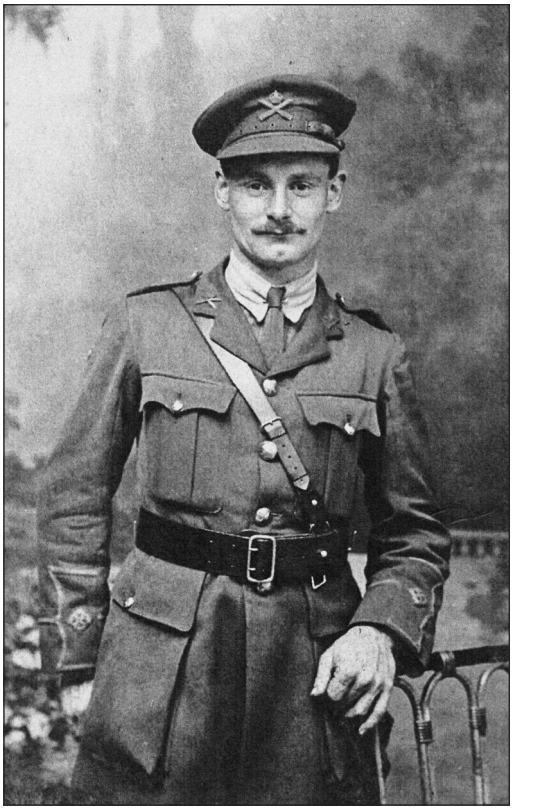

Fig. 7: Second Lieutenant Walter Bradney, Royal Tank Corps.
Source: Gwent Archives, Bradney Papers.
Reproduced by kind permission of Gwent Archives.

offensives, which led the Germans during the spring and summer of 1918 to exhaustion, defeat and the Armistice. Colonel Bradney had much to do before he could go home.

Back to Blighty

The dispensing of Bradney's services was not due to his lack of ability or drive. In his statement to the *Cardiff Weekly Mail* when he was awarded a knighthood in the New Year's honours list of 1924, Bradney gave the following reason:

> The labour groups were undergoing reconstruction owing to the inevitable losses and orders were given for older officers, namely those over 55 years of age to go home.[124]

Due to its losses, the army ceased to be careless of its men's lives after the slaughter of the Somme in 1916 and Passchendaele in 1917. A chapter in *Call To Arms* describes how the army carefully

[124] GA, D554/87.

Fig. 8: A British tank destroyed by German gunfire, showing how Walter Bradney and all his crew were killed on 24 March 1918.
Source: Mapping the First World War.

husbanded its human resources for the crucial and final year of 1918.[125] Colonel Bradney had a number of jobs to do before going home to Monmouthshire. From 15–30 April, he visited many labour companies, especially his Chinese labourers.[126] He was visited by his brother officers. On 17 April, Colonel Gordon, labour commandant, reserve army, brought with him the wrong application for resignation form; Colonel Tuson, labour commandant of the Second Army called on 23 April, but missed him, although he visited again when Bradney was in on 28 April; Major Winby had called on the previous day. Colonel Bradney rode to the 2nd Army headquarters on 2 May where he met Lindsay, the deputy assistant director of labour. He dined with Colonel Bromley Davenport the next day and on 5 May, Major Langdon arrived to take over the 28th labour group.

Bradney went home on 6 May reaching London at 9.30 p.m. and was soon after gazetted out as 'no longer employed by the Labour Corps.' For Joseph Bradney, his war was over.

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125 Messenger, *Call To Arms*, 265–85 (ch.9).
126 GA, D554/91.

After The War

Three questions need to be asked about Bradney's post-war life. Did his wartime experiences lead to any deterioration in his character and health? What sort of life did he lead after the war? What sort of man was he?

Joseph Bradney did have a hard war. He lost his wife and his youngest son. The photograph of Bradney and his officers show him in the centre of the middle row and a black officer seated, second from the left, in the same row. His many dealings with his Chinese labourers evidence a relationship which was of the best; he took good care of his men and was involved in the planning of their camp near Abbeville. He was not, by the standards of the day, a racist. He was a conservative, yet had charity to those of different political persuasions. In the aftermath of the miners' dispute of 1926, he appeared as a character witness at the trial of Alderman Arthur Jenkins, later MP for Pontypool and father of Roy Jenkins.[127] There is no evidence that the war caused any ill health and Bradney's health remained good for many years.

His death certificate dated 1 July 1933, lists the causes of death as syncope, cardiac dilation, myocardial degeneration, septic arthritis of the right aureole and pyorrhea alveolis. In other words, he died of degenerative heart disease not a coronary occlusion, which left time to arrange for the deposit of his research papers with the National Library of Wales.

Bradney's quality of life for most of the period after the war was good. He completed his work *A History of Monmouthshire* excepting only the volume on the *Hundred of Newport*,[128] was knighted in 1924 and received an honorary degree of doctor of letters from the University of Wales.[129] He carried out his duties as a landowner, a justice of the peace and a deputy lieutenant of Monmouthshire. Rosa Bradney died in February 1927, whilst Nest, his younger daughter married a Colonel Christopher Berkley, presenting him with three grandsons.[130] In November 1927, Bradney remarried, marrying Florence Prothero of Malpas Court.[131]

What sort of man was Bradney? A kind man, principled, well-organised and patriotic with a strength well able to cope with the test of war. When this author was researching Bradney's diary, reference D554/91, two identification discs fell out of the packet, one red to be retained by the finder, one green to be left with the corpse. During his year on the Western Front, from May 1917 to May 1918, Joseph Bradney had walked through the valley of the shadow of death.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Following a thorough search and lacking any proof of copyright, acknowledgements are made to Tony Hopkins, County Archivist of Gwent and the staff of Gwent Archives for making available the photographs used from the Bradney papers, reference D554. Acknowledgements are also made to the Imperial War Museum for permission to reproduce a photograph of a labour battalion from *Call to Arms* and a Holt Caterpillar tractor hauling a 6-inch gun. Finally acknowledgements are given to A.K.G. Images for permission to reproduce a destroyed tank from *Mapping the First World War*.

Thanks are also given to: Don Carter for making available a copy of a photograph of Sir Ivor Herbert and Joseph Bradney in Newport in 1914; to Howard Humphries of Gwent Archives for

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127 Nichols, Reginald (ed.), *Monmouthshire Medley. Volume One* (Starling Press Limited, 1st edn., 1976),106.

128 Rimmer, David, 'The County Histories of Monmouthshire and Gwent', *The Monmouthshire Antiquary*, XXIX (2013), 111.

129 *Ibid*.

130 www.ancestry.co.uk.

131 Gray (ed.), *A History of Monmouthshire. Volume 5. The Hundred of Newport*, viii.

pointing out the photograph of Colonel Bradney and his officers of the 2nd Monmouthshires; to Janet Karn, Blaenau Gwent Local Studies Librarian for supplying a copy of the article about Joseph Bradney in *Monmouthshire Medley*; and to Angela Saunderson of Gwent Archives for helping to translate from the French the menu of the Christmas dinner of the 28th labour group.

If any acknowledgements for sources used have not been quoted, may the person or persons concerned accept my apologies.

REVIEWS

South Wales Record Society No. 27. The Diaries of Margaret Penderel Jones of Garth, 1871–1897. Edited by P.W. Jackson. SWRS, Newport 2014.

This latest volume in the publications of the South Wales Record Society has been beautifully produced and lavishly printed by Dinefwr Press Ltd., Llandybie. It is well illustrated and carefully edited by Peter Jackson, a retired academic who edited a previous volume for SWRS of *The Letter-Books of W. Gilbertson and Co. Ltd., Pontardawe, 1890–1929*. Margaret Jones began writing her diaries twenty years before Gilbertson, though she knew members of the family, and she describes the management of a modest landed estate in the rural area on the fringes of industrial Pontardawe in neighbouring Llanguicke (Llangiwg). The property Margaret inherited from her father on his death in 1864 was on the slope of Garth mountain where her house can still be seen from the main road between Pontardawe and Gwauncaegurwen. As well as Garth House, her inheritance consisted of several cottages and three tenanted farms of Garth (141 acres), Gelliluog Isaf (74 acres) and Cwmllynfell (120 acres) with its mineral resources. These were small upland pastoral farms with poor quality soil and Margaret was not one of the principal landowners in the district, though Jackson describes her as 'a prominent landowner' and 'the mistress of Garth'.

Jackson provides an interesting and well-researched Introduction, a sound index and fairly thorough biographical notes. The family trees he produces as appendices are meticulous and there is a helpful bibliography. It would have been most helpful to have had the particular year printed at the head of each page of the diaries instead of having to go back many pages to discover the relevant year.

Peter Jackson makes claims for Margaret which are not sustained by the internal evidence of the diaries, some of which she might not have made for herself. The first concerns her social status and her Pendrill/Penderel inheritance of which she seems to make very little. In a country which lacked a middle class she had a social position; she was noteworthy as a woman alone in a man's world, but she does not display her importance. The 'unaffected candour' that Jackson claims for her hardly allows her a single opinion of her own about anything. There are some descriptions of churches and the occasional sermons, mostly good, especially the Nonconformist ones which she preferred. The diary is very factual, but far from writing about both 'the mundane and significant events', Margaret makes no reference to any event of significance beyond her immediate environment, except the marriage of Queen Victoria's son Alfred in St. Petersburg in January 1874. Whether what emerges from the diaries is 'a dynamic tableau of the rural, commercial and industrial life of her community and its inhabitants' is something for the social historians to debate. Interesting it is, but dynamic it is not.

Most of the diary is taken up with details of cash payments made by Margaret in the management of her estate and received from her tenants as rentier. There are notes of goods delivered, especially coal, and details of farming activities and social visits. There is a consuming interest in local news of births, marriages and deaths, though she participated in very few of the social events she recorded. Apart from a brief reference to *The Cambrian*, she does not mention a newspaper or any book that she read; nor is there evidence of any cultural life apart from a brief reference to a local eisteddfod that Lizzie, her cousin, might have attended, and a Welsh song that she heard Lizzie singing in the house. Margaret had some interest in the affairs of Llangiwg church and in the Parish of Pontardawe where she still paid rent for her family pew but rarely attended. She went infrequently on Sundays to services in Llangiwg, to which she was driven in her phaeton by Lloyd her resident coachman.

Vicars and curates called on her for tea, usually with their collecting bowls and once to doff a cap at her young cousin. Margaret was no pushover. She was not afraid to say what was 'too expensive'. She sent the curate packing for wooing Lizzie and she took the Vicar to court for reneging on a personal debt.

More importantly Margaret evicted her tenant farmers for their inability to pay their rents at a time of agricultural depression. There is no explanation of the causes of the tenants' problems by Margaret or her editor. Nor is there any discussion in Jackson's Introduction of Welsh rural problems in this post-Rebecca period in that part of Wales. Carmarthenshire was only a few villages away and there were still issues associated with short farm leases and high Poor Law rates. Matthew Cragoe's work on Carmarthenshire at the time of Margaret's diaries provides further details.

It seems from her diaries that Margaret had a typical Victorian attitude towards the Welsh language. Welsh was fine in church on Sunday but English was better for business and smarter in school if the children wanted to get on. She herself was sent to a 'finishing school' in Clifton at the age of fifteen. She did take an interest in her local school and became the treasurer of the School Board in 1875. She did nothing about the education of her young cousin, Lizzie, who lived with her from the age of twelve until she was married at the age of thirty-two, much against Margaret's better judgement and no thanks to her. Lizzie was twenty-five before her Confirmation in Pontardawe in 1876. Margaret continued to treat her as a child and went on doing so until her marriage. At the same time Margaret devoted much of her time after 1884 to Lizzie and her family in Llandeilo.

Peter Jackson wisely uses the letters of Margaret Jones to fill in the gaps for the years when no diaries have survived. The letters are more intriguing than the diaries and put more flesh on the bones. The bones are frustrating to the social historian because they provide only brief hints or clues to the answers to his questions. For the most part the diaries are little more than an aide-memoire to Margaret in her business activities. She probably never expected them to be published after her day. It is a tribute to the labour of love on the part of her editor and the generosity of the South Wales Record Society that they have been published now.

Arthur Edwards

Llwyd, Rheinallt and Owen, D. Huw, eds., *Searching for Family and Community History in Wales* (Gwasg Carreg Gwalch, Llanrwst, 2014); ISBN 978-1-84527-466-5; paperback, 319pp

Interest in family history research in Wales has been blossoming over the past three decades. Television programmes such as the BBC's Who Do You Think You Are and BBC Wales' Coming Home have given people an appetite for discovering their own family's background. This is not just ancestor bagging to create a family tree, but more often than not a desire to understand the context of the lives of relatives by researching social and community history too. The programmes and accompanying publications have shown that it is not too difficult to get started, and these days an internet connection can mean that much research is available without having to leave the house.

Among the various books published to help researchers on their way is David Hey's excellent *The Oxford Companion to Family and Local History* (OUP 1996 & 2010). However, such volumes only paid a relatively brief reference to the peculiarities of Wales, so it was a bonus that in the same year John and Sheila Rowlands published Welsh *Family History: A Guide to Research*. Neither publication was a beginner's guide, but looked at different avenues of research and available resources for those who wanted to take things a step further.

Although the Rowlands' book featured help on aspects of the Welsh language that would aid researchers in Wales, there was little available actually in Welsh. This is what Rheinallt Llwyd and Huw D. Owen, the editors of *Olrhain Hanes Bro a Theulu* (Gwasg Carreg Gwalch 2009) sought to address. Luckily it was soon realised that the wider non-Welsh speaking community of Wales would also benefit from this collection of essays and work began on producing an English language version.

Searching for Family and Community History in Wales is much more than a list of repositories and research guides. The fourteen contributors are experts in their fields and the range of the different subjects covered gives a variety of styles and approaches that makes the book all the more interesting. Some, but not all, have notes and most tend to have either a bibliography or a list of publications for further reading.

The list of contents reflects the wide range of resources available to historians and researchers. Family Knowledge and Records, Criminal Records, Houses and Landscapes and even Folk Poetry as a Resource for Local Historians feature in the twenty chapters. One problem in providing information on accessing research resources is the ever changing nature of on-line provision by institutions, societies and individuals. The book does as well as it can to refer to internet options in such changing circumstances.

What makes the book all the more interesting is the sometimes unexpected resources highlighted in certain chapters. Helen Palmer's Local Government begins with the question "What is local Government?" and it soon becomes obvious that for the researcher it is a lot more than might be imagined as we are taken through manorial records and borough courts, charters and coroners rolls, settlement orders, militia and vermin.

Rheinallt Llwyd's discussion of Oral Testimony deals with repositories of oral history, a background to the subject and has a very useful appendix on collecting oral testimony; a checklist for the oral historian.

In Searching for Family and Community History in Wales, Rheinallt Llwyd and D. Huw Owen have brought together a compilation of discussions that will be useful to even the most seasoned of researchers.

Steffan Ellis

OUTINGS AND EVENTS FOR 2014

5 April, The Annual General Meeting: The speaker this year was our immediate past president, Ian Burge, who gave a much appreciated talk entitled 'We Won't Live in a Castle'. This was the title of a song by Guy Mitchell an American pop star. Ian Burge felt this song aptly summed up his desire to live in interesting historical places as opposed to his wife's desire to live more comfortably. Ian had a large collection of interesting photographs which showed the various houses he had almost acquired and those in which he had spent many happy years.

3 May, A guided tour of Dyffryn House: Significant parts of the ground and first floors have been restored to their Victorian splendour and are now open to the public. Work on the restoration started in January 2012 with money from the Heritage Lottery Fund and the Vale of Glamorgan Council. During the tour we heard about John Cory, the wealthy coal merchant who built the present house in 1893, and his son Reginald, who was a passionate horticulturalist and collaborated on the garden design with Thomas Mawson who also designed Bell Vue Park, Newport. Following the tour members visited the superb gardens. Some people also visited **Tinkinswood Burial Chamber** which is situated nearby. Constructed nearly 6,000 years ago, this Neolithic burial chamber held over fifty individuals. The capstone is one of the largest in Britain. In Neolithic times there would have been an earthen mound covering the chamber. Parts of the site were reconstructed following its excavation in 1914 by John Ward the first Keeper of Archaeology at National Museum Wales.

22 May, A visit to Bedwellty House: Frank Olding, MAA member and Blaenau Gwent's Heritage Officer, gave us a guided tour of the house and gardens. Bedwellty House is a listed Regency villa in the town of Tredegar. It is surrounded by an historic garden that was established in the early 19th century for the Master of Tredegar Iron Works. We assembled in the ball room for Frank's lecture on the conservation of the house. His delivery and sense of humour made the whole experience most enjoyable. Afterwards we were given a guided tour of the House and Park which are both intimately linked with the early social history of Industrial Wales. Everyone was fascinated by the passage to the ice house and the Council Chamber with its association with Aneurin Bevan and the Labour movement. We also visited the Miners' room, so called because it was used to give out food parcels during the miner's strike. It poured with rain, but the gardens were beautiful in the rain as the colours were more vibrant. Following the tour Frank Olding kindly provided tea and cake in the excellent café.

19 June, A coach trip to Deerhurst Church and Tewkesbury Abbey: The Parish Church of St Mary at Deerhurst was formerly a priory church. Its architectural history is complex, but a substantial part of the building is now considered to belong to the first half of the 9th century. There is notable Anglo-Saxon sculpture and many surviving Anglo-Saxon arches, doorways and windows. In the early 13th century the Anglo-Saxon nave walls were cut through by Early English arcades with attractive carved capitals. There is a collection of medieval glass at the west end of the south aisle, including a 14th century figure of St Catherine and a 15th century figure of St Alphege who was a monk at Deerhurst. The Cassey family brass of 1400 shows the family and unusually includes a dog called Terri. A stained glass window in the north aisle commemorates the notable geologist, Hugh Strickland. A major new discovery is a painted figure of Anglo-Saxon date on a stone panel which is possibly of 10th century date. Close by is **Odda's Chapel,** a single two-cell building of nave and chancel built by Earl Odda in memory of his brother Ælfric. It is dated 1056 by an inscription which

is now in the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford. We then visited **Tewkesbury Abbey** for a guided tour. The Benedictine Abbey was founded in 1087 by Robert FitzHamon, but the construction of the present Abbey only started in 1102. Embellishments to the long nave roof and the apsidal chancel were made in the first half of the 14th century. After the dissolution in 1540 most of the cloister buildings and the Lady Chapel were quarried for their materials, but the Abbey Church was sold to the parishioners.

5 July a talk by Ann Benson on Troy house and the Troy Estate given at Gwehelog Village Hall: In 2013 we visited Badminton House and became aware of its connection with Troy House which was rebuilt by Henry Somerset, the third Marquess of Worcester, after the Civil War. Ann Benson's excellent and well attended talk was therefore eagerly anticipated. Troy house and estate was occupied by the Herberts and then the Somersets. After three hundred years of continuous ownership, the Estate was auctioned in 1901 leading to a succession of owners of its different parts including nuns who ran the house as a girls' school. The house was sold again in 1979 and has been unoccupied since the late 1980s. The Estate consists of three main parts: the house and its pleasure gardens, a four acre walled garden and a farm. Dr Benson described the four key periods of ownership and occupation and detailed her research into the changes to the building and estate. She concluded that overall, the estate is in poor condition with many of its historically important features at risk, and with the authorities seemingly unable to stem the deterioration. Dr Benson has kindly provided us with detailed information which can be found on our website. Following the talk members were fortunate to be invited to visit her garden which many of our members found awe inspiring. The tea and cake was much appreciated.

6 August, A visit to Tintern Abbey with our guide Keith Underwood alias 'Brother Thomas': A detailed account of this visit has been provided by our member John L. Evans and can be found on our website. Keith Underwood was wearing his white Cistercian habit with black hood and working apron. His detailed knowledge of Tintern Abbey was exceptional. The Cistercian order of monks was founded in 1090, breaking away from the worldly Benedictines. Tintern Abbey was founded in 1131. Cistercians architecture was simple and the interiors of their churches were painted white, there was no stained glass and altar crosses were made of wood. The Cistercians were favoured by marcher lords because they reclaimed and developed land for farming. Much of the hard labour was done by lay brothers ('conversi') who wore brown habits. The Cistercians were skilled water engineers as the great drain at Tintern illustrates. A monk would spend one third of his day in communal worship, one third reading and in private prayer, and one third doing manual work. In services, Cistercians chant was plain and polyphony was disapproved of. Their numbers were halved by the Black Death, and there were only twelve monks at the time of the Dissolution in 1536. Hospitality, charity and caring for the sick and infirm were important aspects of monastic life. At the Dissolution, all silver and gilt items went to the King and the monastic estate was transferred to the Earl of Worcester. Documents went to the library at Raglan Castle, but most were destroyed after the Civil War siege in 1646. The Tintern Bible is now in the National Library at Aberystwyth. We continued our theme by visiting the exhibition **'Sites of Inspiration: Tintern Abbey' at Chepstow Museum.** We are indebted to Curator Anne Rainsbury for her interesting talk about tourism that grew up around the Abbey in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries fostered by the growth of interest in the picturesque. The exhibition displayed a superb collection of art work and some archaeological remains including seals, stone sculpture, lead papal bulls, candlesticks and floor tiles. The Tintern Bible which survived from the Tintern Library was also on display. The visit was much enjoyed by our members.

6 September, A visit to Professor Ray and Dr David Howell's excavation at Llanfihangel Tor y Mynydd: Professor Ray Howell, one of our members, has been excavating this structure with his son, Dr David Howell, who is a lecturer in Heritage and Archaeology with the University of South Wales. Over the last year and a half they have revealed a building in excess of 15m in length including a complete standing bread oven. The excavation has revealed a room with a hearth and bread oven and two rooms off to the left. To the right of the hearth is a small room. The finds, such as a very early clay pipe bowl and coins, indicate a 16th -17th century structure, but there is evidence of a medieval floor underneath the stone slabs. The finds also include a mill stone and a stained glass piece of window which Maddy Gray states she has only seen in relation to ecclesiastical buildings of the time. The building seems to have been abandoned due to a fire. This excavation begs questions about past land usage and population in what is now a small village. The other cottage on the site, and the 16th century longhouse in which Ray lives, indicates that there was a greater density of population at this time and the excavation adds to our knowledge of land use at this time. Following the visit to the site we went to The Star Inn and Ray joined us for lunch.

15 November, 'A Day School: Gwent in the Great War', at the Drill Hall Chepstow: This event was held appropriately at the Drill Hall, Chepstow and over seventy people attended. It was organised by Peter Strong (one of our committee members) on behalf of The Western Front Association (Gwent Branch). Other societies involved were; The Gwent County History Association, The Monmouthshire Antiquarian Association, The Chepstow Society and The Tidenham History Group. Speakers were Dr John Dixon who spoke about 'The Monmouthshires: a territorial regiment at War', Wayne David MP who spoke about 'The First World War and Conscientious Objectors in Gwent', and Steve Trew who demonstrated 'Kit and Equipment from the Great War'. After lunch Dr Angela Gaffney spoke about 'Remembrance' and afterwards there was a walking tour of sites of remembrance led by the Chepstow Society. The Monmouthshire Antiquarian Association funded and served refreshments throughout the day and the donations were given to a military charity. It was an interesting and successful day and thanks to Peter Strong for all his hard work.

27 November, A lecture and private viewing of 'EQUUS -The Horse at War' the exhibition at the National Roman Legion Museum: Forty-nine members gathered to hear Dr Mark Lewis, their chairman and the Museum's curator, give a talk about the Equus exhibition. Our usual 'mind picture' of a Roman soldier is of a Roman foot or legionary soldier. As Mark pointed out during the First World War over a million horses were used by the British Army. Although the type of weapons the horses were pulling or carrying had changed, the way in which they were used often differed very little from the Roman use almost 2,000 years previously. Mark began by giving us statistics about the cavalry units of a Legion. He described how the mounted soldiers fought and looked at evidence for Roman auxiliary horsemen within the National Roman Legionary Museum's collection of inscriptions and iconography. These soldiers were skilled horsemen from across the Empire and used methods and weapons which were essentially Celtic in origin. They used a form of saddle, but had no stirrups. Sometimes horseshoes were used, but it is uncertain when or why. Mark drew our attention to the inscription of twenty-eight year old Aurelius Herculanus who was one of the 120 horsemen (equites) attached to the legion as scouts and dispatch riders. In iconography the auxiliary Roman horseman is often shown in the process of killing a native with a spear and examples could be seen in the museum. Mark then discussed the armour worn by the auxiliary soldiers and the armour worn by the horses. The piece of armour that protected the horse's face, a chamfron, has been found during excavations at Caerleon. He described the many months of painstaking conservation

and reconstruction. The Caerleon chamfron, one of only a handful found in Britain, is unusual as the metal work, rather than the leather work, survived. Such elaborately decorated chamfrons adorned the horses of high status cavalrymen on parades or during tournaments which were performed on religious festival days and special occasions. As people left they praised Mark's talk and the wonderful Roman-style food prepared by the Museum's team. Thanks also to Dai Price, the manager of the NRLM, for allowing the event to take place.

12 December: MAA Members' Social: About forty people attended the social at our treasurer's and secretary's home and all declared they had enjoyed themselves.

Christabel Hutchings
Honorary Secretary

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

Muriel Adams was first and foremost a teacher and then headteacher of pupils of primary school age. She became involved in teacher education and became head of the department of teacher education and training at the then University of Wales, Newport. She holds a masters and doctorate in education and, since retirement, has gained an MA in Art History from the Open University and an MA in Regional History from the University of South Wales.

Mark Brett M.C.I.f.A., joined Cotswold Archaeology in 1993 and is currently a Senior Project Officer. He has directed a number of excavations of varying size, and contributed to their publication.

Arthur Edwards is a Canon emeritus of St. Woolos' Cathedral, Newport. He retired as area Dean of Newport and Vicar of Caerleon three years ago. He left London University in 1966 with an M.Phil degree in History and he has served as a priest in the Church in Wales for forty-six years. His publications include *Archbishop Green* (Gomer Press, 1986) and *Thomas Thomas of Pontypool* (Apecs Press, Caerleon, 2009). He is currently researching the religious and social history of nineteenth-century Monmouthshire.

Steffan Ellis is the Community Engagement Officer with Newport Museums & Heritage Service. Born and raised in Gwent, he returned to education as a mature student when he studied Welsh and Welsh Studies at Coleg Harlech, Drama at Aberystwyth and an MA in Celto-Roman Studies at Newport.

Richard Frame ran an organisation for homeless people for twenty-five years before his retirement. He has always had an interest in history and archaeology and joined an archaeological society at the age of eight. He is also a published author and publisher. His main interests are Chartism, St Woolos Cemetery, Victorian Newport and the First World War. As well-known local speaker and tour guide he is well-known to many local historical societies. Richard also co-founded the Newport Local History Society and more recently, The Friends of Newport Museum and Art Gallery.

Neil Holbrook B.A., F.S.A., M.C.I.f.A., is Chief Executive of Cotswold Archaeology. He has particular experience and expertise in Romano-British archaeology and has published widely on this.

Christabel Hutchings has researched the history of education in the nineteenth century, for which she was awarded an MEd by Cardiff University. More recently, she has completed an MA in Celtic-Roman studies at the University of Wales, Newport; her dissertation was entitled 'Slavery and Status in Roman Britain'. She has done extensive research into the archive of Thomas Henry Thomas (1839–1915); her catalogue of this archive was published by the South Wales Rocord Society in 2012. In 2010, she was elected Honorary Secretary of the Monmouthshire Antiquarian Association.

Ed McSloy B.A.Hons, M.C.I.f.A., joined Cotswold Archaeology in 2001 and is the Senior Finds Officer, with specialisms in lithics and small finds.

David Rimmer read history at Manchester University and trained as an archivist at Liverpool University. He was City Archivist of Coventry from 1974 to 1993 and County Archivist of Gwent

from 1993 until his retirement in 2008. Whilst at Coventry he published a researched history of Warwick Road Congregational, later United Reformed, church. He was made Honorary Research Fellow by the Coventry Lanchester Polytechnic, now Coventry University, in 1983. He is a member of the Gwent County History Association Committee and a member of the committee of the Monmouthshire Antiquarian Association.

Peter Strong was born and raised near Newbury in Berkshire. He taught history at Caldicot Comprehensive School from 1979 until 2013, for most of that time as head of department. He has been secretary of Caldicot and District Local History Society since 1991 and Chair of Gwent Local History Council since 2000. He is also Chair of the Gwent Branch of the Western Front Association.