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Gazebo or Folly on Tidenham Chase

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Other relations mentioned are 'my sister Guise,' 'my sister Bradshaigh' (who 'cures the most inveterate sores in the King's Evill thus, as she says, but I could never make it do'), 'my cousin Arnold,' 'cousin Windsor,' and 'my sister Howard.' This last relationship is apparently accounted for by reason of the fact that one of Annabella's daughters married Edward, Duke of Norfolk.

At page 226 is a receipt headed 'The Rendcomb Way of brewing October Beer called Rendcomb Rock,' and there are some receipts which were provided by Sir Robert Southwell, and one entitled 'Mrs Codrinton's Oyntment.'

C. ROY HUDLESTON.

GAZEBO OR FOLLY ON TIDENHAM CHASE

On the 6-inch ordnance map, Gloucestershire LIV, there is a tumulus marked 'Roman Altar found A.D. 1825.' It is shown on the National Grid Sheet 31/59 at 5590/9810. This tumulus has already been noticed as one of those Gloucestershire tumuli in which Roman altars have been found buried¹. The Roman altar was recorded by the late Dr Geo. Ormerod of Sedbury Park as having been found on Tidenham Chase in 1825, the year in which he came to live at Sedbury, but Ormerod does not say that he actually excavated it². He subsequently presented it to the Archaeological Institute at their Bristol Meeting in 1851³. Within a year the Society transferred the altar, with Ormerod's consent, to the British Museum where it is now housed.

The Ordnance Survey got its authoritative location of the site where the altar was found from Mr E. Hartland of Hardwick Court, Chepstow in 1901⁴.

The Archaeological section of the Forest of Dean Local History Society excavated this site in the season 1952-53.

¹E. M. Clifford, *Trans. B.G.A.S.*, LX, 298 (1938).

²G. Ormerod, *Strigulensia*, (1861), pp. 4, 39.

³*Arch. Journ.*, VIII, 332 (1851).

⁴C. W. Phillips, *Arch. Officer, Ord. Survey.* (1952).

The tumulus was a barely perceptible humping of the ground at a spot near the Jubilee Stone, a stone taken from the Triassic strata at Pillhouse Rocks on the Severn and erected to commemorate Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee in 1897. The location is called the Parson's Allotment, being originally common land, never known to have been forested. Following the Enclosure Acts it was allotted to Tidenham Church. The Church sold the land, about 1905, to Sir William Marling of Sedbury Park. Later it passed through other private owners' hands until it was acquired by the Forestry Commission in 1929 and planted with Corsican pine trees. These trees had grown to some considerable size over the tumulus site and the Forestry Commission kindly cut down 3 or 4 of those which interfered with the work of excavation.

There was an irregular ill-defined bank in places about 1 foot 9 inches high around a central tump about 1 foot 6 inches high. The greatest width, from bank to bank, was about 80 feet and a trench was driven across at that point, roughly from South to North. The banks were found to rest on a detrital layer of carbonised vegetation at the original ground level and in this layer on the south side coal, coal ash and a clay pipe bowl were recovered. The rising roughly in the centre proved to be earth and vegetable detritus covering a pile of stones which had been mortared. When the loose stones were cleared away a rectangular built stonework emplacement or plinth, long axis practically east-west, was discovered beneath, measuring 7 feet by 3 feet 4 inches—of three courses of stonework squarely dressed on the outside. The top of this emplacement was uneven and rough showing that courses of stonework had fallen away from it and the displaced stones were heaped around forming the slight mound or tumulus. On the long side on the north there was a projecting step or hearth about 10 inches wide and 5 feet 3 inches long of flat stone unsymmetrically placed and set at the level of the second course of stonework. In the middle of this side, also, at roughly the centre, two stones 11 inches apart projected one inch from the face of the wall, leaving a cavity which was filled with debris. As the width of the square

base of the Roman altar is $10\frac{1}{2}$ inches it was first thought that the altar had stood in this cavity. The projecting stones showed slight traces of fire and a quantity of coal, partly coked coal, and ashes occurred here and around the step. All the fallen mortared stones were collected and it was apparent that they would have been sufficient for many more courses of stonework. The altar is only 18 inches high and if it really had stood in this cavity it would have been submerged by the missing courses of stonework.

The whole area around the stone emplacement was excavated completely to the foundation level of the stonework for distances varying from 4 to 8 feet from the plinth walls and four wide trenches were dug into the surrounding area, north, south, east and west, in each case well beyond the positions of the low encircling bank. The results obtained were as follows:—

Around the emplacement about the level of the step or hearth there was a floor roughly surfaced with flat stones extending about 4 feet on all sides. Many iron nails of rectangular section, 4 inches long clenched at $3\frac{3}{4}$ inches sometimes occurring in a row at definite intervals as if from a burnt away wooden beam, some charcoal lumps, fragmentary clay pipes, diamond shaped glass panes, angles 66° and 114° , sides 8 cms. and blobs of melted lead, coal, coke and ashes and charcoal flakes, a worn shilling of George I dated 1720 and a child's domed toy watch glass with incuse hands, hour and minute figures in Arabic numerals, occurred on or above this floor. The earth of the floor in many places was burnt red by fire and many of the glass panes had been fused and twisted by heat. Not a single object of Roman origin was encountered but in the outfield there were some flint flakes and a discoidal scraper similar to those found around the nearby Bronze Age barrow. The marks of leading were plain on many of the glass pane edges and in instances pieces of oxidised lead still adhered to the edge of a pane. The glass has been examined and analysed by Professor H. Moore of the Department of Glass Technology of the University of Sheffield. It showed a high total of lime and magnesia typical of glass made throughout the Middle Ages and even as late as 1750. He considers it was made by the Muff process and attributes it to the 17th century or slightly later. Quite independently Mr Noel Heaton, an expert on ancient and modern stained glass, has examined specimens and come to the conclusion that the glass must be assigned to the 17th century. The glass was found in quantity in only two spots, one on the east side and the other on the west side of the plinth, from which it may be concluded that windows existed only on these sides.

A sample of the charcoal from the east side of the plinth examined by Dr F. W. Jane of the Royal Holloway College, University of London, proved to be from ash wood.

The clay pipes were found both inside the fully excavated area and in the outer trenches. All had raised letters W and C on the sides of the heel, and when examined by the Oswald¹ system were found to belong to types 8b, 8c and 9a, *i.e.* to the period 1690-1740. It is difficult to be certain as to the makers of these, but there were two Bristol makers of this period, William Chearington and William Cissoll.²

As to the toy watch face very little can be said except to point out that minute figures of clocks and watches of comparable size to the hour figures, as was the case on this toy glass, as well as the use of arabic numerals for the hours figures were first introduced about the beginning of the 18th century.³

To sum up, then, the glass, pipes, coin and toy point to a date for this site around the beginning of the 18th century.

An analysis of the mortar of the plinth by Dr Norman Davy of the Building Research Station of the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research showed it to be non-Roman in type but with particles of red burnt shale from coal shale. Many pieces of just such shale were encountered in the ashes excavated.

These results make it clear that some sort of nailed wooden frame building existed here around a stone-built fireplace and chimney. This building had windows of leaded diamond-shaped panes on its eastern and western sides. Such windows would allow of splendid views up and down the valley of the River Severn from Gloucester to its junction with the Wye and the Bristol Avon, and of the Bristol Channel. Moreover it was roofed either with thatch or heather or wooden slats which, when it was destroyed by fire, as it undoubtedly was, would leave no trace. It was probably erected early in the 18th century, a time when Follies and Gazebos were the fashion, and that it was used in the cold winter months is shown by the stone-built fireplace and the abundant evidence of the use of coal. In fact the ash tip was found on the south side outside the surrounding bank.

¹ A. Oswald, *Arch. Newsletter*, III, 153 (1951).

² J. E. Pritchard, *Trans. B.G.A.S.*, XLV, 165 (1923).

³ See G. H. Baillie, *Watches, their History, Decoration and Mechanism*, pp. 199+ foll. (1929).

In the early days of this work when it was thought that the presence of a Roman altar here might indicate some Romano-British sylvan shrine it was decided to examine the altar more closely. It is made of reddish grit and is much weathered and apparently uninscribed, but Mr J. W. Brailsford of the British Museum Department of British and Medieval Antiquities agreed to have it photographed by infra-red light and by side illumination in case some traces of a painted or carved inscription remained. The results however were entirely negative.

It must be concluded that the Roman altar was brought to the Folly as an embellishment and the question arises as to its origin. It is of interest in this connection to point out that the Temple in Lydney Park is the nearest site in which a Roman altar would be likely to occur. Actually no altar was found at Lydney although there was a stone in the cella of the Temple on which an altar might have been expected to stand. It is significant that the beginning of the 18th century was just the period when ownership of Lydney Park passed from the Winter family to the Bathurst family. The Temple site was then waste common land in this park and no doubt an odd altar lying about could easily be removed to adorn some newly-built gazebo.

It is most likely that the folly was built by the chief landowner or lord of the manor of that time. Such was the James family who held most of the lands of Stroath, Sedbury and Tidenham. Stroath House which lies immediately below the folly site on the line of the old Roman road between Caerwent and Lydney, now the main South Wales highway, was built in 1690 in the reign of William and Mary and occupied by Mr Charles James. It is noteworthy that an original leaded glass window still remains in the dwelling portion and several such windows in the old stables of the mansion. At this time also Mr Alexander James had a seat and estate at Tidenham House, but the Folly is much nearer Stroath House.

This commanding site lies on the top of Tidenham Chase about 575 feet up. The underlying strata is the Millstone Grit, which within a very short distance changes to Carboniferous Limestone, but most of the stones of the fireplace come from the former strata.

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