

S278 Highways M-Way Jct
Out to tender
Write with proposal, cost estimate

90/01
173

E000337

PRELIMINARY ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT
OF
LAND AT THORNWELL, CHEPSTOW

DECEMBER 1990

COPYRIGHT

The contents of this document must not be copied in whole or in part without the written consent of Countryside Planning and Management.

1.1 Introduction

This report describes the results of a preliminary assessment of the archaeological content of an area of land at Thornwell Farm, Chepstow, defined by the Chepstow-Newport railway line, the M4 motorway, Thornwell Lane and the southern edge of the Bulwark housing estate. The area is outlined on the accompanying map, (Plan CPM 1).

1.2 Aims

The aims of the research are to define the character and extent of any archaeological features within the study area; to provide an initial appraisal of their potential importance and to assess the possible implications for the proposed development.

1.3 Approach Adopted

In order to maximise the returns within the time available, the form of the investigation and the use of sources has been highly selective. In particular:

- i) Fieldwork has been limited to one visit to the site;
- ii) For the purposes of general historical background only a few readily-accessible published sources have been consulted;
- iii) The consultation of archival material has been restricted to the repositories within Gwent. This has of necessity meant that more distant repositories which are known to contain relevant material, especially the National Library of Wales in Aberystwyth and the Public Record Office in London, have been ignored at this time. The investigation of material in these repositories would be a high priority for future investigation;
- iv) Where local informants have advised that information is limited or lacking in certain repositories, these have not been followed up in person.

Sources of information identified in the text in Sections 2 and 3 are listed in full in Section 4.

2.0 SUMMARY OF THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTENT OF THE THORNWELL FARM AREA AS KNOWN AT DECEMBER 1990

2.1 Background

It must be recognised that almost all areas are archaeologically richer than the present state of knowledge suggests, and that even an intensive archaeological field survey programme, carried out over many years, can only identify a limited proportion of the sites which actually exist. Because of conditions of subsequent land use, many archaeological sites are no longer visible from the ground surface. Old pasture may retain earthworks representing the remains of various forms of domestic, agricultural, religious or industrial activity. Such remains are soon levelled by ploughing. Levelled sites can sometimes be identified through the use of aerial photography, but there are many limitations on this technique imposed by soil conditions, weather, and modern land use. Even where air photographs are available in some quantity, they will never give a comprehensive picture of what exists below the topsoil. However carefully any area has been surveyed beforehand, therefore, there is always a possibility that further sites may be revealed during the course of development.

2.2 Land Use Constraints

In December 1990 most of the Thornwell Farm area is under grass, and much of it has been pasture for a considerable time. Areas of old pasture are more likely to contain well-preserved earthworks, but are less likely than arable land to reveal sites through aerial photography or artefact scatters. Some of the fields now under grass are known to have been ploughed for a few years early in the present century, however, either from the evidence of the

1906 Sale Catalogue (for reference see Section 4) or from information from the farmer, Mr E Wiles. While shallow ploughing has probably done little damage, it tends to smooth out and blur the edges of earthworks and makes sites less readily recognisable. Fields known to have been under arable cultivation at any time within the present century are cross hatched on Plan CPM 1. It is apparent that the quality of information is significantly lower for those fields which have been ploughed in the comparatively recent past but have since reverted to pasture.

2.3 Previous Archaeological Investigation

Until very recently there was no knowledge of any significant archaeological remains within the Thornwell Farm area. Gwent has not yet been surveyed by the Royal Commission on Ancient and Historical Monuments in Wales. Although there has been some documentary research by local historians, there is no archaeological society in Chepstow and apparently no tradition of local field work. The Gwent Sites and Monuments Record contains details only of Thornwell Farmhouse itself (a Grade II Listed Building) and the adjacent well. The first indications that the area has more archaeology emerged early in November 1990 through a trial excavation carried out by Mrs Joyce Pullinger, which identified a Bronze Age barrow (Site 1 on Plan CPM 1). Subsequent to this brief field survey was undertaken by Gareth Dowdell of the Gwent/Glamorgan Archaeological Trust, and most of the sites listed below have been located as a result of his initial field survey. CPM have visited the site since, on 13th December 1990, in company with Mrs Pullinger and Mr Wiles, and have collated all the information currently available, ordered, so far as is possible, in chronological sequence. By reason of their very

recent discovery there is no published archaeological literature or historical documentation on any of the more ancient sites described.

2.4 Neolithic

An archaeological trench cut out from the centre of one of the Bronze Age barrows, Site 1 (see below), has revealed post-holes and a gully containing neolithic flint, sealed beneath the Bronze Age levels towards the edge of the barrow. This may represent some sort of hut. Neolithic buildings are not common, and so this may be of considerable importance; it certainly requires further investigation.

2.5 Bronze Age

The principal visible prehistoric features are at least two bronze Age round barrows, with the possibility of several more constituting a small cemetery:-

04432g

04432g
Site 1: Bronze Age round barrow (ST.53959170 approximately)

This site has recently been the subject of an exploratory excavation carried out by Mrs Pullinger, initially in the anticipation that the surface remains were of a farm building. A large tree is growing in the mound, making its original shape and size difficult to ascertain, but some substantial stones are visible in and around the perimeter of the mound, suggesting a wall around the cairn. The remains of one large rectangular cist, approximately 1m x 2m, flanked on one side by two smaller cists have been examined. The uprights stood c. 1m high, and there were flagstones at the floor of the main cist, with an old turf layer beneath. The tops of the cists had collapsed. Finds include three

inhumations from the largest cist; two more from one of the adjoining smaller cists, burnt bone presumably indicating a cremations from the other small cist; fragments of at least one late neolithic/early Bronze Age pot; and a barbed and tangled flint arrowhead. The finds remain for the moment the property of the landowner, but the material has been seen by Bob Trett at Newport Museum and by Neil Maylan of the Glamorgan and Gwent Archaeological Trust. The excavation has been backfilled, but the tops of the upright cist stones are still visible.

Site 2: Bronze Age round barrow (ST.54029174 approximately) 04440g

This is a well-preserved and prominent mound, not quite perfectly circular, about 13m north-south by 11m east-west, sited (like Site 1) on a false crest when viewed from the direction of the present farm lower down the hill. There are signs of stonework in the mound, but no particular evidence of any encircling ditch. While dating from surface evidence alone can never be wholly secure, it has all the characteristics of a second Bronze Age round barrow.

05341g Site 3: Possible Bronze Age barrow (ST.54039163 approximately)

05342g Site 4: Possible Bronze Age barrow (ST.53999154 approximately)

05343g Site 5: Possible Bronze Age barrow (ST.54009147 approximately)

Sites 3-5 were identified by Gareth Dowdell as a result of a rapid field survey. The evidence is not wholly convincing, but they cannot be ruled out without proper survey; the presence of two barrows is quite likely to indicate further examples close by.

2.6 Iron Age

A presumed Iron Age fort at The Bulwarks lies 1Km to the north of Thornwell Farm and outside the study area; it is likely to have been surrounded by contemporary fields. There are several broad, low banks or terraces (shown as dotted lines on Plan CPM 1) within the area examined which are not immediately explicable in terms of recently grubbed-out hedges, and it is possible that these represent fragments of an Iron Age or Romano-British field system.

2.7 Romano-British

No Roman sites are known with certainty, but there is a likelihood of Roman settlement within or close to the area. Gareth Dowdell, in his initial survey, suggested that the earthwork enclosures of Site 10 (Plan CPM 1) are possibly of Roman date. They may equally represent the remains of a small medieval farmstead. In the absence of any precise dating, these are discussed under sub-section 2.8 below.

2.8 Medieval

0200g

Site 6: Well

The well at Thornwell Farm (ST.53839164) is said to be of medieval origin, and has given its name to the farm (Bradney, 1929, iv.i, p22 - copy supplied by AR). The site was inspected by D Edwards for the Ordnance Survey Archaeology Division in December 1956; he was informed by the then owner, Mr Sharp, that the well was itself called "Thornwell", and that its water had the reputation of being good for sore eyes; a large thorn tree formerly grew alongside it, but this was destroyed many years ago. There is a local tradition that it was once blessed by a bishop of Llandaff. Edwards himself recorded that the well measured 3m x 2.4m and was surrounded by a stone wall 0.4m wide and 1.8m high. The wall

appeared to him to be comparatively modern. The well had an arched stone roof and was partly covered by ivy and brambles; it still contained water, but was then used as a sheep-dip (OS Archaeology Record Card ST.59.SW.36 - copy supplied by AR). A brief examination of the well, has been carried out and nothing significant is added to this description.

2.9 Medieval or Post-Medieval

?Medieval or Post-Medieval Park

The name of the wood "Park Redding" to the north-east of Thornwell should be noted; this may imply the existence of a small medieval or later park, south of Chepstow, which included part or all of the Thornwell Farm site. Documentary sources are said to indicate the existence of a medieval hunting park in Chepstow in 1291 (Clarke, 1980, 1, 138, original source not quoted), and there are certainly later records of a park in Chepstow in 1584 (NLW Schedule of Manorial Records Vol.2, p.22), 1663 (NWL Badminton Schedule, no.1250F), 1774 (ibid. no.9504), and 1757 (IBID. no.11724-5). The Patent Rolls in the Public Record Office will probably contain medieval references; a rapid check in the indexes of the published calendars has revealed several incidental references, and these would repay a more thorough examination. Most of the references probably relate to the area called Chepstow Park Wood in Devauden parish, c.5-6Km north-east of the town; however, the possible existence of a second small park in the Thornwell area merits further investigation. The wood called "Park Redding" does not, on a rapid inspection, contain any very ancient trees; it was cut down for timber during the first world war, and has not been cut since (inf.Mr Wiles). It is surrounded in places by a possible medieval wood-bank, and also contains some

indefinable earthworks. Nothing resembling a medieval park pale was found during field survey but such a feature may not have been required on the river side of the park in any event.

?Medieval or Post-Medieval Rabbit Warren:

The name "Warren Slade" immediately north of Park Redding suggests that there may also have been an artificial rabbit-warren, a feature often found in conjunction with medieval parks. This wood formerly belonged to the Duke of Beaufort (unlike Park Redding), and an examination of the Beaufort papers may yield some information. It occupies steeply shelving ground and is in places very overgrown; the ground surface within the wood is very uneven, but no evidence of pillow-mounds (artificial rabbit burrows) were found.

?Medieval or Post-Medieval Ridge and Furrow

Rather narrow and irregular ridge and furrow can be traced in some of the old pasture on the plateau, most clearly in the area stippled on Plan CPM 1. This does not closely resemble the medieval open-field broad ridge and furrow of the midlands of England, but is more similar to the narrow rig of Shropshire, some of which does appear to be medieval.

2.10

Post-Medieval

012019

Site 7: Thornwell Farm (ST.53869163) is a listed Grade II building, probably of sixteenth-century origin. It is first documented by name in a deed of 1505 (inf. Mr I Waters, 2.12.1957, quoted on O.S Record Card ST.59.SW.35). It is described in a sale catalogue of 1906 as containing 'a large Hall, 2 Sitting rooms, 2 kitchens, Back Kitchen, 5 Bedrooms, large Attic, Back Kitchen with Bread Oven and Loft; Dairy and Cheese-Room over; Cellars etc.;" there

were also ;Outbuildings comprising Stabling for Feeding-house for 7, Barn, Bull's House, Calves' House. Pigstyes, Fowls' House, etc.' (Gwent C.R.O., D.163.0001). In 1957 it was described as 'A large two-storyed farmhouse with stone rubble walls which average 0.7m thick. Its doors, windows and roof are all comparatively modern except for one leaden 17th-century window in the north-east wall. In the interior are several thick adze-cut ceiling beams with broad chamfers and 16th-century-type stops. Between the first and second storeys is a string course, and immediately below the wall-plate is another. The walls are partly plaster-covered... An outbuilding abuts the north-east wall' (D. Edwards, field investigation, 9.12.1957, O.S Record Card ST.59.SW.35). Past owners and occupants of Thornwell Farm have included William Madock, who died there in 1506; Roger Alday, resident in 1573; probably William Lewellin (*sic*) of Hardwick; John Ford, who died there in 1670; Henry Morgan, farmer at Thornwell in the early 18th century, died 1734; his son in turn, Paul Morgan II (1736-93), gentleman farmer, Turnpike trustee, owner of wharves at Hunger Pill and Small Meads, and in 1773 Receiver-General of Monmouthshire. Paul Morgan III occupied Thornwell until 1809, and was followed by John Smith until 1833 and Edwin Carter of Chepstow from 1834 until 1846. John Sharp farmed Thornwell from 1846 and Samuel Sharp bought it in 1906 (Bradney, 1929, iv.1, 22; Waters, 1975, p.211-2, quoting sundry sources). The house is now derelict and boarded up, and the farm buildings in an advanced state of collapse.

← 053449

Site 8: Summer House (ST.54059143 approximately)
A two-storey building sometimes called the Folly, said to have been used as a seamark for trows in the channel; shown on a chart of c.1832 as 'Thornwell

Lookout' (Waters, 1975, p.212). The 1906 sale catalogue still describes one field of a little over 6 acres as 'Summer House, Ground, Arable' (Gwent C.R.O, D.163.0001). No building is shown in this field on either the 1901 Ordnance Survey 1:2500 or the 1906 sale catalogue map, but the 1921 O.S shows a building labelled as 'club house', presumably a later structure relating to the golf course. It was square in plan, with an upper room approached by an external stairway and a domed roof, with lovers' knots carved in the plaster in the upper room; it would have commanded a splendid view. After the construction of the motorway through the south-western angle of this field it fell into ruin, and was demolished in the early 1970s as an exercise by the territorial army (inf.Mr Wiles). The description of the building as remembered would fit an 18th-century gazebo, but its failure to appear on the 1901 and 1906 maps is puzzling. The square outline of the building is still faintly visible on the ground, immediately above a pile of stones.

Site 9: Traces of a possible post-medieval settlement (Centred ST.5412980 approximately) identified by Gareth Dowdell. There are faint earthworks in the area which require survey.

Miscellaneous post-medieval features:

There are at least two former quarries (labelled 'X' on Plan CPM 1) and a former stockyard ('SY' on Plan CPM 1), in addition to earthworks caused by the removal of two or three hedges.

Mr Wiles believes that the original approach to the farm was from the north-east; there are clear traces of an old track following the eastern boundary of the two paddocks east of Thornwell Lane, south of Site 10. Part of this course was still followed by

a track in 1906. Various maps show further tracks east of the farm which are no longer in use.

2.11 Recent

Railway main line:

The site is bounded on the east by the Gloucester-Newport railway, of which the section south from Chepstow was originally authorised by the South Wales Railway Act of 1845 and opened in June 1850 (Christiansen, 1981, 69-70).

Railway branch line:

The 1921 O.S shows a branch railway diverging from the main line immediately south of Thornwell and heading northwards towards Chepstow, crossing Thornwell Lane at an oblique angle some 300m north of the farm. There was formally an engine shed and tank west of the lane, just south of the crossing.

Golf Course

Chepstow Golf Club had a 9-hole golf course over two of the fields of Thornwell Farm for a few years in the 1920s (inf Mr Wiles). This is shown on the Ordnance Survey 1921 edition occupying the two adjoining closes immediately east of Thornwell Farm and south-west of Park Redding. No obvious remains of this were seen, but it may have left a residue of minor earthworks from former tees and bunkers which might cause confusion.

2.12 Date Unknown

Site 10: (Centred ST.540920 approximately). On one of the highest parts of the plateau, a rectangular enclosure defined on two sides by a bank, c.85m x 35m. The longer side on the south is slightly stepped inwards at a point c.20m east from the corner. The eastern bank has a return at the corner, but the northern side is not clearly

defined. There are several internal features, and an outwork to the south. Gareth Dowdell has suggested that this may be a Roman feature. While not ruling out this possibility, the feature could equally be a medieval farmstead. This feature appears to be shown as a small square outline in the 1st edition Ordnance Survey 1:63,360 of 1830, contained within a much larger rectangular outline which is unrelated to the present field boundaries; it is not depicted on any of the later editions of the larger-scale maps examined.

Site 11: Earthworks of unknown date have been identified midway between Thornwell Farm and Park Redding, south-east of Site 10 (Centred ST.54059193 approximately; inf.GD). Further survey is necessary.

3.0 THE THORNWELL FARM AREA IN ITS HISTORICAL SETTING

3.1 Introduction

It is necessary that the archaeological sites within the Thornwell Farm development area are not viewed in isolation, but are seen as part of a wider historic landscape, for at least three reasons:

- i) Every site within the area will be related in various ways to other sites outside it; it will be impossible to understand those sites fully without reference to those wider relationships;
- ii) For the medieval and post-medieval periods the wider context of manor, estate and lordship will have important implications for the availability and location of documentary sources; and, while the medieval and post-medieval sites within the area need to be treated as independent sources of archaeological evidence in their own right, the documentary sources will also need to be examined as parallel sources of information;
- iii) If development takes place within the area, its impact is unlikely to be confined strictly within the bounds of the area, and some awareness of the likely implications for neighbouring sites is necessary.

3.2 Prehistoric

Study of the estuarine levels below Thornwell would be likely to produce considerable evidence for the post-glacial development of the shoreline. Elsewhere the estuarine margin has been shown to be geomorphologically and stratigraphically complex, reflecting a succession of erosion and deposition

episodes (see Allen and Fulford, 1987, for references). It includes some deposits of peat, which may include important environmental evidence. There are some indications of human activity in the levels from the neolithic period onwards.

Notes of other prehistoric finds have been published from Chepstow, including a neolithic polished stone axe (Clark, 1980, 15); a proper search of the literature and consultation of the Gwent Sites and Monuments Record for the surrounding area would, no doubt, reveal much more.

The presence of a Bronze Age barrow group within the Thornwell Farm area raises questions about its context. Where was the settlement or settlements associated with it? Where were the contemporary fields?

In the pre-Roman Iron Age a promontory fort was built at the Bulwarks immediately outside the Thornwell Farm area to the north; this is defended by double ramparts on the land side and by the river-cliffs to the rear (Clark, 1980, 19). Fields and access-ways contemporary with the fort might be anticipated within the Thornwell Farm area. The Bulwarks promontory fort in turn is one of a series of apparently contemporary earthworks in the lower Wye valley, which also includes the Piercefield hill fort and the promontory fort at Lancaut just north of Chepstow, and these need to be studied as a group. The River Wye may have formed the frontier between the territory of the Silures to the west and the Dobunni to the east. Two gold staters of the Dubunnian rulers Catti and Anted have been reported from Chepstow (Stanford, 1980, 116). So far as can be ascertained, none of these sites has been examined by excavation.

3.3

Roman

The main Roman coastal road of south Wales, from Gloucester to Caerwent and Caerleon, crossed the River Wye somewhere near Chepstow, probably 2-3km upstream from Thornwell. The area lay within the *civitas* or administrative hinterland of Caerwent, 7km to the west. Some sort of Roman settlement has been indicated at Chepstow itself, and Roman pottery kilns have been reported from Caldicot (Stanford, 1980, 161).

The importance of the coastal wetlands along the Bristol Channel in the Roman period has recently been emphasized by Allen and Fulford (1987). They have amassed evidence of villas and other rural settlements within and on the margins of the coastal marshes, extensive rectilinear systems of wide drainage ditches indicating the reclamation of salt marshes in Roman times, and a range of industrial activities, especially the working of Forest of Dean iron, all along the north side of the estuary from Awre and Lydney down to the Wentlooge Level. It is evident that extensive coastal embanking and reclamation was undertaken in the Roman period, but continuing rise in relative sea-level since the Roman period and failure to maintain the drains and sea defences has necessitated a retreat from the Roman shoreline and the buildings of new sea defences further inland in late medieval and early modern times. The nearest known Roman coastal site to Thornwell is at Portskewett, c.4km to the south-west (Hudson, 1977), but there is a strong likelihood of others as yet undiscovered. Any area of post-glacial estuarine alluvium, such as occurs between Thornwell and Caldicot Level, must now be regarded as potentially sensitive.

3.4 Post-Roman to Norman Conquest

After the collapse of Roman rule, Gwent emerged as an independent kingdom around the end of the fifth century, and remained so until c.1020, when it was annexed by the neighbouring kingdom of Morgannwg (Glamorgan). In c.1055 both kingdoms were annexed in turn by Gruffydd ap Llywellyn of Gwynedd (d.1063). The administrative division of Gwent into *cantreti* and *cymydau* (commotes) was probably devised some time during this period. Chepstow and its surroundings lay within the cantref commote of Gwent Iscoed.

Archaeologically comparatively little appears to be known about this period of Welsh independence. However, the Severn estuary was an important avenue for the expansion of Christianity, forming part of the western seaways whose significance during this period has been emphasized by Bowen (1977). Just below Thornwell on the opposite side of the Wye estuary is St Twrog's Chapel and holy well off Beachley Point. The possibility of some form of early Christian occupation on the Thornwell bluff is worth consideration. If the Thornwell was a holy well in the Middle Ages, as is suggested, it is likely to be of pre-Norman origin.

The western seaways were also used by Norse raiders and settlers after the eighth and ninth centuries, and Scandinavian place-names survive further west in the Severn estuary, though none are known this far upstream. St Arfan's church, 3km north of Chepstow, contains an ornate rectangular cross-slab similar in form to Scandinavian or Scandinavian-influenced cross-slabs in Scotland and the Isle of Man, possibly of tenth-century date (Nash-Williams, 1950, 175-7).

The general predominance of Welsh place-names west of the Wye indicates that English settlement began comparatively late. The cantref of Gwent Iscoed was formally incorporated into Harold Godwinson's earldom of Hereford after the campaign of 1065.

3.5 The Middle Ages

In 1067 William FitzOsbern became Earl of Hereford, and before his death in 1071 he had crossed the Wye and built the first castle at Strigoil (Welsh *Ystraigl* = "the bend of the river"; the English name Chepstow given to the town which developed outside the castle, was increasingly applied to the castle itself and the whole lordship after the thirteenth century). Most of Gwent was brought under Norman control between 1067 and 1091. The Thornwell area became part of the new lordship of Strigoil, which included most of the commote of Gwent Isecoed.

The lordship of Chepstow was held by the de Clare family from 1115 to 1176, by the Marshalls, Earls of Pembroke, from 1189 to 1245, and by the Bigods, Earls of Norfolk, from 1245 to 1306. In 1324 the castle and manor of Chepstow were rented from the Earl of Norfolk by Hugh Despenser the younger, favourite of Edward II. It was held by the Mowbray Earls of Norfolk into the mid-fifteenth century and then came into the hands of the Herbert Earls of Pembroke through an exchange of lands.

Parts of the lordship of Chepstow were granted away or leased from time to time. It might be possible to establish the occupancy and use of the Thornwell area during the Middle Ages by examining sources for the lordship as a whole, but this is likely to be a lengthy undertaking. One possibility can be eliminated: Thornwell was certainly not amongst the lands of the lordship granted to Tintern Abbey by

its founder Walter de Clare or any of his successors as patrons; apart from some urban property in Chepstow, its local property was centred on the grange of Rogerstone in St Arvans, and did not extend this far south (Williams, 1990, 61-4, 99). Chepstow Priory, founded soon after 1067 by William FitzOsbern as a dependency of his abbey of Cormeilles, acquired an estate which covered over 300 acres in c.1291 (Cowley, 1977), but the precise extent of this land has not been established.

3.6 Post-Medieval

After the Act of Union in 1536 the new English county of Monmouthshire was created out of the ancient Welsh kingdom of Gwent, with the addition of the cantref of Gwynllwg to the west but the loss of part of the commote of Ewyas to Herefordshire. New subdivisions based on the English form of hundreds were created, the commote of Gwent Iscoed being incorporated within the hundred of Caldicot.

At some time part of the area came into the hands of the Dukes of Beaufort, who were and are major landowners in Gwent. Further investigation of this matter is required.

4.0 SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Listed below are all sources to which leads were found during the preliminary study.

4.1 Local Informants

In order to minimise travelling time and the possibility of searches in repositories which would prove unproductive, enquiries of the following informants have been pursued by telephone:

AH = Andrew Helme, Museums Officer for Monmouth Borough (tel. 0600 3519)

AR = Anne Rainsbury, Chepstow Museum (tel. 0291 625981)

GD = Gareth Dowdell, Gwent/Glamorgan Archaeological Trust (tel. 0792 655208)

RT = Bob Trett, archaeological curator, Newport Museum (tel. 0633 840064).

The site has also been discussed in person with the following:

NM = Neil Maylan, Gwent/Glamorgan Archaeological Trust

JP = Mrs Joyce Pullinger, 2 Rosemary Lane, Stroath, nr Chepstow

Mr Wiles, the last farmer at Thornwell.

4.2 Aerial Photographs Checked:

The following oblique photographs have been examined:-

Cambridge University Collection, AN72 (copy in Gwent CRO): distant view of Thornwell in a high-level oblique of the Wye estuary from the north, no significant details visible.

Aerofilms, A./225335 (copy in Gwent CRO): low-level oblique of Bulwark housing estate, showing part

of Bulwarks hill fort and north end of the Thornwell fields, but no significant details visible.

In addition, one high-level vertical has been seen (part of a stereo mosaic):

South Gwent Photography, July 1984, 208, frame no.8
(Copy in Gwent County Planning Department)
available from Mr R H Blakeman, Aerial Photo
Unit, Block B, Brooklands Avenue, Cambridge,
CB2 2D3, tel. 0223 358911, est 5785.

Further air photographs will almost certainly exist.

4.3 Documentary Sources Checked in Calendars Only:

- 1306 Inquisition post-mortem of Roger Bigod, Earl of Norfolk, 1306 - includes extent, but no mention of Thornwell (Cal.Inq. Post-Mortem Vol.iv, 294-7).
- 1427-8 Inquisition post-mortem of John, Duke of Norfolk - no mention of Thornwell.
- 1584 Survey of Chepstow - no mention of Thornwell in abstract (NLW Schedule of Manorial Records deposited by the Duke of Beaufort, Vol.2 [Monmouthshire], p.22. no,1595).
- 1687 Survey of Chepstow - no mention of Thornwell in abstract (ibid. no. 1598).

4.4 Original Documentary Sources Checked:

- 1899 Sale Catalogue of estate of Duke of Beaufort (Gwent CRO Man/H/20/0061) - includes property in Chepstow, but excludes Thornwell Farm.

1906 Sale Catalogue (Gwent CRO D.163.0001): includes map showing land use and brief description of farmhouse and outbuildings.

4.5 Maps Checked:

Undated sketch of land in Chepstow belonging to Duke of Beaufort (Gwent CRO D.25 E and E 1435) - does not include Thornwell Farm.

1773 Map of the Summer House Lands, Chepstow, in collection of estate maps belonging to Morgan Lewis of St Pierre (Gwent CRO D.501.1332) - checked in anticipation that this might cover the locality of Site 8 (described in Section 3 above), but in fact it turned out to cover an area on the west side of Chepstow entirely outside the study area.

1830 Ordnance Survey 1st edn. 1:63,360 (1 inch = 1 mile).

1830 Ordnance Survey 1st edn. 1:2500 (25 inch = 1 mile), Monmouthshire Sheet XXXI.1.

1901 Ordnance Survey 2nd edn. 1:2500, Monmouthshire Sheet XXXI.5.

1921 Ordnance Survey 1921 edition 1:2500, Monmouthshire Sheets XXXI.5-6.

(It should be noted that no earlier estate maps have been seen, but may exist at Aberystwyth - see further below. Moreover, the parish copy of the Chepstow tithe map has not found its way into the Gwent County Record Office, and is presumed to be lost; the Tithe Redemption Commission and Diocesan copies may still be extant in their respective repositories, see 4.x below).

4.6 Published Sources Consulted:

(It should be noted that there is no Victoria County History for Monmouthshire, and that no Inventory for the county has yet been published by the Royal Commission on Ancient and Historical Monuments in Wales).

ALLEN, J.R.L & FULFORD, M.G. (1987) 'Romano-British Settlement and Industry on the Wetlands of the Severn Estuary', *Antiquaries Jnl.* Vol.LXVII pt.ii, pp.237-289.

BOWEN, E.G (1977) *Saints, Seaways and Settlements in the Celtic Lands* (University of Wales Press, Cardiff).

BRADNEY, Sir J (1929) *A History of Monmouthshire, Vol.IV part I: The Hundred of Caldicot* (photocopy of relevant pages from AR).

CHRISTIANSEN, R (1981) *A Regional History of the Railways of Great Britain, Vol.13: Thames and Severn* (David and Charles, Newton Abbott).

CLARK, A. (1980) *The Story of Monmouthshire, Vol.1* (Monnow Press, Monmouth, 2nd edn.).

COWLEY, F.G (1977) *The Monastic Order in South Wales, 1066-1349* (University of Wales Press, Cardiff).

JONES, F (1954) *The Holy Wells of Wales* (University of Wales Press, Cardiff).

NASH-WILLIAMS, V.E (1954) *The Early Christian Monuments of Wales* (University of Wales Press, Cardiff).

STANFORD, S.C (1980) *The Archaeology of the Welsh Marches* (Collins, London).

WATERS, I (1975) *The Town of Chepstow* (photocopy of relevant pages from AR).

WILLIAMS, D.H (1990) *Atlas of Cistercian Lands in Wales* (University of Wales Press, Cardiff).

A rapid search through the numerous publications of the Chepstow Society was made, but nothing specific to Thornwell was found apart from a paragraph in Waters (1975).

BOON, G.C (1980) 'Caerleon and the Gwent Levels in early historic times', in F.H Thompson (ed), *Archaeology and Coastal Change* (Soc. of Antiquaries of London Occasional Papers, new series, 1), pp.24-36.

HUDSON, R (1977) 'Roman coins from the Severn estuary at Portskewett' *Monmouthshire Antiquary* Vol.III, parts iii-iv, pp.179-185.

REES, W (1942) *South Wales and the March, 1284-1415* (Oxford).

4.7 Repositories Not Visited:

The following repositories were not visited for lack of time, but it is believed that they may contain material of value to the enquiry:

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE, LONDON: This is believed to contain the Tithe Redemption Commission's copy of the Chepstow tithe map.

NATIONAL LIBRARY OF WALES, ABERYSTWYTH: This is believed to contain at least two items of importance:-

- (1) Records of the land from the time when it was in the ownership of the Duke of Beaufort. The calendars of the Beaufort MSS, copies of which are available in Gwent CRO, indicate that there is a vast amount of material on the Monmouthshire estates of the Duke. There are numerous surveys, leases and deeds relating to Chepstow, in addition to a series of Chepstow Court Rolls of 1568-9 (no.1718), 1663 (no. 1710), 1706-9 (no.1711), 1712-13 (no.1728) and 1712-14 (sic) (no.1729), leet proceedings (2057.m.1723), estreats of the borough in 1616-17 (no.1741) and of the manor in 1653-4 (no.1745) and 1616-17 (no.1741). I found no specific mention of Thornwell in the calendars, but clearly the originals need to be worked through at Aberystwyth.

Regrettably no early estate maps of the area have yet been seen, but there appear to be amongst the Beaufort MSS, eg the calendars at Gwent CRO mention an undated 18th-century map of the Duke's property in the parish of Chepstow (no.13137) and a survey of the manor of Chepstow containing 14 pages of tinted maps dated 1824 (no.1599).

We are advised that, in order to gain access to these records, formal written authorization is required from the Duke's solicitors (the approach should be made in the first instance to Humberts, Chartered Surveyors, the Estate Office, Badminton, Avon, GL9 1DD); in addition we understand that advance notice to the

librarian is required. In view of the shortage of time and the distance to Aberystwyth it has not been possible to pursue this line of enquiry; but it clearly is a high priority for future work.

- ii) the diocesan copy of the Chepstow tithe map (inf. Gwent CRO).

In contradiction to the above, the following repositories were not visited because preliminary enquiries had suggested that they would yield little relevant information:

NATIONAL MUSEUM OF WALES, CARDIFF: If any material from the Thornwell area had found its way into the National Museum it should have been indexed within the Gwent Sites and Monuments Record, and this was not, therefore, regarded as a priority; however, it should be double-checked.

ROYAL COMMISSION ON ANCIENT AND HISTORICAL MONUMENTS IN WALES: I am informed that RCHAM have no records of the land in question.

GWENT COUNTY SITES AND MONUMENTS RECORD: I am informed that, prior to the discoveries of November/December 1990, the County SMR had identified only the Listed farmhouse and well within the enquiry area (inf.GD).

CHEPSTOW MUSEUM: I am advised that Chepstow Museum has no archaeological collections and no records of any previous finds in the Thornhill area (inf. AH,AR).

NEWPORT MUSEUM: Material from the Thornhill barrow excavation is reported to have been taken here for

identification (inf. AH), but this has been discussed over the telephone with RT and NM and in person with JP.

4.8 Published Sources Not Checked

Limitations of time have made a systematic search of the periodical literature impossible. It can be anticipated that, had there been any major references to the archaeology of the Thornwell Farm area, these would have been noted within the Gwent Sites and Monuments Record. It is very difficult for such record systems to effect a complete and comprehensive search of the literature, however, and a more closely focused search might yield some dividends. Papers on the archaeology of the Chepstow area may be located in a wide range of journals, especially *Archaeologia Cambrensis* (from 1846) and *Monmouthshire Antiquary* (from 1961). Historical material may be located in the *South Wales and Monmouthshire Record Society Publications* (from c.1949).

5.0 CONCLUSIONS

5.1 The results of this preliminary appraisal confirm that the Thornwell Farm study area does contain several archaeological sites of some considerable potential interest, ranging in date from the neolithic period to the first half of the present century. Most of them, particularly those features of medieval date or earlier, require further study before their nature, extent or significance can be determined in full. It is difficult to provide a considered view of either the absolute or the relative importance of the sites examined on the basis of the very limited investigation by any party to date; but on present knowledge Sites 1, 2 and 10 should be regarded as the most important archaeological features within the area. The preservation of these sites has been assisted by the retention of land under pasture and the lack of intensive destructive ploughing.

5.2 Recommendations

The brief was to gather and collate whatever information was available about the archaeology of the Thornwell Farm area, and to indicate its potential significance. A full and considered evaluation of the sites will not be possible until this information has been absorbed and, where necessary, checked further; and it would, therefore, be premature to make any final recommendations at this stage.

Nonetheless, in order to establish the character and significance of the archaeological sites more clearly, the following needs are immediately evident:-

- i) A full analytical ground survey of the whole area in order to identify and record the extent and nature of all the surviving earthworks. In particular Site 10 should be subjected to a detailed large-scale hachured and contoured survey.
- ii) A more thorough investigation of the documentary evidence for the medieval and post-medieval periods, including, in particular, consultation of the Beaufort MSS in the National Library of Wales.
- iii) An historico-ecological investigation of the woods, hedges and old pastures on the farm to determine their content and possible antiquity.
- iv) A full architectural survey of the farmhouse, with detailed recording of the roof structures, elevations and floor-plans and an analysis of the phasing.
- v) The integration of the archaeological, architectural, documentary and botanical evidence to create a survey of the evolution of the man-made landscape of the farm as a whole.
- vi) Selective trial excavation, including in particular further examination of Site 1 in order to explore the nature of the neolithic occupation more fully; and trial excavation of Site 10 in order to establish its date and character.

5.3 In the longer term, the permanent preservation of even the most important sites within the development area is probably not possible. Experience of previous attempts elsewhere at preserving earthworks

within or adjacent to development areas has not, generally, been encouraging: the pressures exerted by a large human presence nearby almost inevitably leads to their eventual degradation. In this instance we believe that the best interests of archaeology would be served by:

- i) comprehensive prior archaeological, documentary and historico-ecological survey and selective trial excavation along the lines indicated above, followed by
- ii) the total excavation and recording of Sites 1, 2 and 10 (if justified by the results of the survey and trial work), ideally prior to the commencement of development, followed by:
- iii) watching-briefs carried out during development, with the option of further salvage excavations if necessary, and
- iv) vigilance as to the effects of the development beyond the immediate development area, in particular the implications for the sensitive estuarine marsh area.