

JOHN STRACHEY, F.R.S.
and the Antiquities of Wessex in 1730

An Archaeological Correspondence Annotated
by Michael McGarvie, F.S.A.

Probably the least known of that remarkable body of West Countrymen who in the late 17th and early 18th centuries did so much to preserve national records and inspire the study of antiquity, is John Strachey, of Sutton Court in the parish of Chew Magna, Somerset. These antiquaries included Thomas Tanner (1674—1735), born at Market Lavington in Wiltshire and author of *Notitia Monastica*, Dr. William Musgrave, (1657—1721), who compiled the massive four volume *Antiquitates Britanno-Belgicae*, born at Charlton Musgrove in Somerset, and Dr. George Harbin, (c. 1666—1744), an Essex man but a scion of the Harbins of Newton Surmaville, near Yeovil. He was Librarian at Longleat and acquired an exceptional knowledge of historical records, both public and private, which he was happy to put at the disposal of any scholar who approached him. Tanner in his youth had known and helped John Aubrey (1626—1697), born at Easton Piercy in Wiltshire, and whose *Natural History* and *Topographical Collection* on that county foreshadowed the work of his younger followers. Strachey's industry was rewarded in his lifetime by his election to the Fellowship of the Royal Society but has since suffered the oblivion more usually reserved for local historians rather than archaeologists. He does not appear in the DNB.

John Strachey came from a family already characterised by a literary and scientific turn of mind. The thread was to persist and in due time it produced the rather more famous Lytton. John's great-grandfather had been Secretary of Virginia and author of a history of that colony. His grandfather, William Strachey, of Camberwell, (c. 1597—1634) established the Somerset connection by marrying Elizabeth, daughter of William Cross, of Norton Fitzwarren. After Strachey's death Elizabeth, who was much wed and long lived, married Edward Baber, tenant of Sutton Court. Left a wealthy widow for the third time, she bought the Sutton Court estate in 1642 and twenty years later settled it on John Strachey (1634—1674) her son. His descendant, Lord O'Hagan, lives there still. John Strachey, the father of our antiquary, was a barrister, well-educated and a man of good intellect. He was a close friend of John Locke, who spent part of his early life at Pensford close to Sutton Court. Much of their correspondence survives and shows that mentally the young lawyer could hold his own with the great philosopher. In December, 1662, Strachey married Jane Hodges (1643—1717), a co-heir, who brought into the family extensive properties at Elm and Buckland Dinham in whose antiquities their only son was to show particular interest.

This boy, the future F.R.S., was born at Sutton Court on 10th May 1671 and baptised at Chew Magna on 1st June.¹

Despite John Strachey's voluminous collection of letters, notes, antiquarian and geological records which survives, much of it in the Strachey collection (DD/SH 1—414) at the Somerset Record Office, materials for Strachey's own biography are not available. The extensive records hide rather than reveal his personality. His childhood and adult life are only known in the broadest outline. He evidently grew up in an enlightened household which stimulated a mind already poised for enquiry. The Widow Strachey's son is described as he was at the age of sixteen by Edward Clarke, a family friend, in a letter to John Locke:

"Her son is grown tall and very like his father in person and humour, and I hope will inherit his learning and virtue also. He is now at Trinity College in Oxford, but I presume is not designed to continue long there."²

(there is a portrait of John Strachey, senior, at Sutton Court revealing a handsome, serious minded, but perhaps somewhat humourless man).

On his 21st birthday in 1692 John Strachey married Elizabeth, daughter of William Elletson, of Alverstoke in Hampshire. She lived until 1722. In 1725 he married Christiana, daughter of Richard Stavely of London, who survived him.³

There was a streak of indolence in the Strachey family and although always studious and loving knowledge for its own sake, it was not until middle age that Strachey began to think of publishing some of the results of a lifetime's investigations. One of the best type of aristocratic dilettante Strachey was not exactly idle. He was a rich young man with wide estates to look after. There was the whole world of learning to sample and much time was spent in travel and research. In addition, he must have been to some degree distracted by a growing family. Strachey had eighteen children by his first wife and one by the second.

Perhaps the atmosphere at Sutton Court was not conducive to the discipline of reducing the spoils of the nation's libraries to the narrow straight-jacket of the printed word. The Revd. Elias Rebotier, who was tutor to Strachey's children from 1702—09, has left an account⁴ of this household where study and the duties of a Justice of the Peace were the norm, enlivened by an occasional journey or a day's hunting, shooting or fishing, and fortified by the pleasures of the table. Strachey himself emerges as a vaguely benevolent figure, a man of 'affability and condescension' dispensing 'many civilities' in a house where life was good. Strachey was less successful in coping with the practicalities of life and his extravagance left Sutton Court estate heavily burdened with debt. In later life he made Sutton Court over to his

eldest son Hodges and spent much time in Edinburgh presumably with a younger son, Henry (1706—1765) who married Helen Clerk, of Listonfield, Midlothian, and Edinburgh. Some rough notes on American trees (DD/SH 372) which appear to be from personal observation suggest that he visited New England, probably Virginia of which colony his great-grandfather, William Strachey had written a history and where John Strachey's son Dr. John Strachey (1709—1756) settled and died. He died at Greenwich on 11th June, 1743, leaving little in print to preserve his memory.

Strachey's first interest lay in what was then known as Minerology mostly concerned with mines but including the study of fuller's earth, salt rocks and pipe clay. His interest extended to the industries these minerals created. This addiction may have been hereditary. His father and John Locke are thought to have experimented in the Mendip mines with a barometer sent by the great chemist Robert Boyle. The son's interest was of a more serious nature and Strachey has been called 'one of the earliest English geologists who was an observer and recorder of geological facts, rather than a theorist. He made what were, for the time, outstanding contributions to stratigraphical geology'.⁵ Besides this, he was a keen local historian with a natural bias towards the genealogy of gentle families and the history of their estates. In an age when records were widely scattered and difficult of access he abstracted an amazing number of local charters and inquisitions *post mortem*. The study of antiquities, or archaeology as we should call it, seems to have been limited to those on or near his estates plus others he saw when travelling which particularly took his fancy. When these three-fold interests were brought together as in his proposed 'Somersetshire Illustrated' they form a valuable combination.

It was presumably by correspondence with scholars to whom he proffered his local scientific and antiquarian knowledge that Strachey obtained considerable standing in the academic world, a *succés d'estime* crowned by his election to the Royal Society on 10th December, 1719. His first published work was *A Curious description of the strata observ'd in the Coal-Mines of Mendip* which appeared in the *Philosophical Transactions* of that Society the same year (vol. 30, pp. 968-73). After this he was in touch with the antiquary William Stukeley (1687—1765). Strachey's influence on *Itinerarium Curiosum*, published in 1724, as far as the antiquities of the West of England were concerned is readily apparent and handsomely acknowledged. The two antiquaries visited The Weddings (as the Stanton Drew Stone Circle was then known) together of which Strachey has left an account in his 'Somersetshire Illustrated' (see Appendix). Stukeley described Strachey as 'a person well vers'd in natural history and antiqui-

ties.⁶ Stukeley is no doubt using the term natural history as Strachey himself defined it to comprise 'Baths, Medicinal Waters, Earths, Minerals, Coal, Stone, Metals, and Fossils.' Strachey also drew the Abbot's Lodging at Glastonbury just before it was pulled down, a sketch which Stukeley reproduced in his book.

In 1725 Strachey produced *An account of the Strata in Coal-Mines* (*Phil. Trans.* vol. 33, pp. 315-98) and in 1727 *Observations on the different strata of Earths and Minerals* (also relating to coal mines) published by J. Walthoe in London. He then switched to a different tack and compiled *An Alphabetical List of the Religious Houses in Somersetshire* which was published by Thomas Hearne in his edition of the Hemingford Chronicle in 1731.⁷ At the age of 65, perhaps aware of time creeping at his gate, Strachey made an effort to get two works close to his heart into print. One was a map, *Somersetshire Survey'd and Projected*, which was actually printed in 1736. It does not seem to have sold and is now rare.⁸ Strachey himself cut copies up and used them as scrap paper. Although the map contained interesting historical information, it probably lacked sufficient detail to make it a commercial success. His 'Somersetshire Illustrated' which was to be 'a Topographical Description and a Natural and Geographical History of that County' got even less far much to the loss of posterity. The printed proposals for it were published in London on 24th July, 1736.⁹ It was never completed. Two manuscript versions, both incomplete, survive in the Somerset Record Office. One is a rough notebook (DD/SH 107), the other a fair copy (DD/SH 108). Both can be used with profit. Even the fair copy seems far from ready for the printer. The facts do not appear generally to have been given any literary form. The work is painstaking and somewhat dry, all too rarely brightened by Strachey's own observations or the record of what local people have told him. Among the Strachey muniments is a letter from John Bampfylde to Strachey (DD/SH 96), dated 10th March, 1737, suggesting he consult Dr. George Harbin whose archival knowledge was unrivalled. Strachey obviously took this up as his manuscript is full of acknowledgements to the erstwhile Longleat Librarian.

The failure of 'Somersetshire Illustrated' did not deflect Strachey's belated desire to appear in print and in 1739 there appeared a book unique in its day which anticipated by more than 100 years the work of the Historical Manuscripts Commission. This was *An Index to the Records, with Directions to the Several Places Where they Are To Be Found*, (London, printed for G. Hawkins, at Milton's Head between the Temple-Gates) a kind of 18th-century local historian's encyclopaedia which deserves to be better known. There is a copy amongst his papers (DD/SH 204) although not his own. It bears the bookplate of Sir

William Blackstone, in itself a tribute to the *Index*. The alphabetical list runs from abbies to writs. In addition there is a list of offices where records were to be found, a helpful glossary of latin surnames and English place-names 'as they are written in our old Records explained by the Modern Names', and a chronological table of monarchs with the dates of their Great Courts or Parliaments. In an anonymous introduction, Strachey lays bare the grouses of the 18th century antiquary, grumbles not unknown today. 'Many Records of the same Nature', he writes, 'which ought to be collected into one place, are scattered in several Offices.' Personal frustration seems to be implied by his remark that 'whoever has had occasion to search for these valuable Treasures, must be sensible of the great Trouble and Difficulty of finding them . . .' Finally the eternal verity: 'These Difficulties have occasioned many Lawyers and Historians to commit great Mistakes, by taking things on the Credit of those who wrote them, instead of having Recourse to the Originals themselves.' Strachey's observations 'of Stones' and 'of Mettalls' intended as part of the natural history section of 'Somersetshire Illustrated', (DD/SH 116) were published in 1967 by B.D. Webby in the *Proceedings of the Bristol Naturalists' Society*, vol. XXXI, 1964-69, pp. 311-330.

Strachey was one of that breed of reading public who write to authors not to criticise but to enhance their knowledge. This appears to have been the origin of his correspondence (British Library ADD. MS. 6214) with the Rev. John Pointer published below. Pointer (1668-1754), Chaplain of Merton College and for sixty years Rector of Slapton in Northamptonshire, was a noted antiquary who had written a *Chronological History of England*, and, more daringly, *A Rational Account of the Weather*. In 1724, Pointer published *Britannia Romana, or Roman Antiquities in Britain*. This dealt with coins, camps and public roads and it is likely that Strachey read it and decided to send him a detailed account of his own local studies which had only been touched on by Stukeley in his *Itinerarium Curiosum*. I have supplemented the correspondence with selections from 'Somersetshire Illustrated' which bear on the sites mentioned, relevant material from the Strachey archives, and my own annotations.

The amateur approach of Strachey to archaeology, his insistence on Roman origins for so much of what he saw, his ingenuous explanations, may bring a smile to the face of the professional today. Yet his account has much of value. He had the advantage of surveying a largely mediaeval landscape still unenclosed and with the ancient monuments which adorned it untouched. We see them through his eyes almost in their pristine state. Both he and Stukeley chronicle the beginnings of road

improvement which was to have such a disastrous effect on our barrows and stone circles. The folklore he picked up from local people is deeply interesting. His charming drawing of Devizes Castle is particularly satisfying as the site is now completely submerged under 19th century buildings. His Maesbury with its 'lunetts' and road system contrasts strongly with the silent, much battered Maesbury of today. There are numerous small but useful details such as his description of Stone Beacon, the Roman Milestone at Street-on-the-Fosse, and that the Roman coins always stated to have been found at Tedbury were in fact found at Egford, on the outskirts of Frome.

As a writer Strachey is most unscientific. He is a poor and inconsistent speller and his grammar was peculiar to say the least. He scatters capital letters about without system. These traits are also noticeable in 'Somersetshire Illustrated'. I have retained much of this as characteristic of him. In order, however, to make his work easier to read I have taken some liberties, particularly with punctuation and in expanding his contractions. I have myself been inconsistent in retaining the familiar *ye* with its period flavour while spelling out the other *thorn* letters which Strachey uses liberally.

I am grateful to Lord O'Hagan for allowing me to publish extracts from John Strachey's writings, to the Trustees of the British Library for permission to reproduce Strachey's plans and to the staff of the Somerset Record Office. Dr. John Harvey kindly read this article in typescript and, besides correcting several errors, his view that Strachey's notes comprised 'a most valuable sidelight on antiquarian knowledge and attitudes 250 years ago' encouraged me to publish. Mrs. J.H. Willbourn kindly typed the manuscript.

References

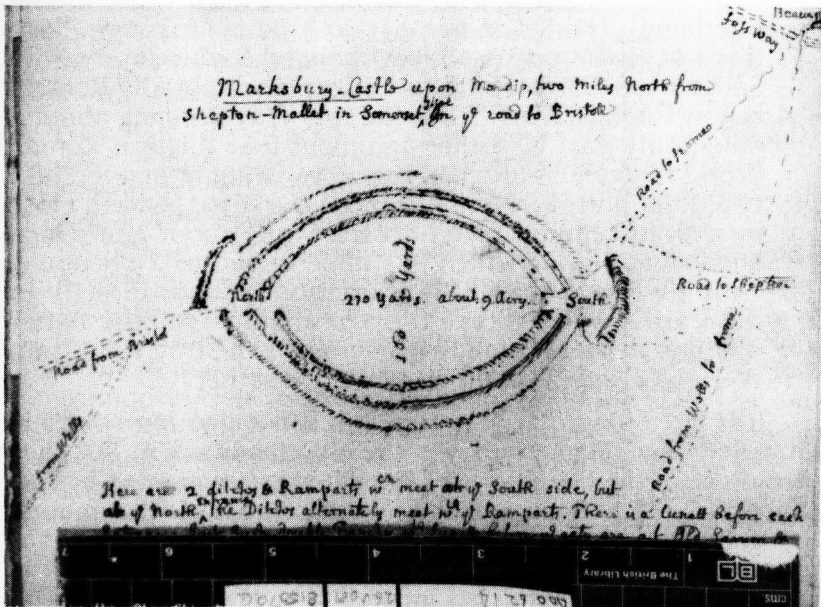
1. Copy of Chew Magna Parish Register, Frederick A. Wood Collection, Weston-super-Mare Public Library.
2. Quoted in C.R. Saunders, *The Strachey Family, 1588—1932* Duke University Press, 1953, p. 53.
3. *Ibid.* p. 54.
4. *The Autobiography of the Rev. Elias Rebotier, Rector of Axbridge, Somerset.* Proceedings of the Somerset Archaeological Society, vol. 40, 1894, part II, pp. 109—11.
5. V.A. Eyles, *Scientific Activity in the Bristol Region in the Past*, p. 131 of C.M. MacInnes and W.F. Whittard, *Bristol and its Adjoining Counties*, 1955.
6. *Itinerarium Curiosum*, p. 141.
7. *Walteri Hemingford Canonici De Gisseburne, Historia de Rebus Gestis Edvardi I Edvardi II Edvardi III*, Oxford, 2 vols.
8. There is a copy in the Strachey archives (DD/SH 150). See also T. Chubb, *A Descriptive List of the Printed Maps of Somersetshire, 1575—1914*, Somerset Archaeological Society, 1914, pp. 35—36. Strachey's was the first county map on a large scale—just over $\frac{1}{2}$ an inch to a mile.
9. Reproduced in full in *P.S.A.S.* vol. 14, 1867, part II, pp. 94—96.

THE CORRESPONDENCE

f.26 Endorsement: Somersetshire: These Papers were given me by that Learned & Ingenious Gent. John Strachey, Esq. F.R.S. being a very exact Description of some antique Camps found in his Lordship in Somersetshire. John Pointer.

Marksbury-Castle upon Mendip, two miles North from Shepton-Mallet in Somersetshire in ye road to Bristoll.

Here are 2 ditches & Ramparts which meet at ye South side, but at ye North entrance the Ditches alternately meet with ye Ramparts. There is a Lunett before each entrance. Just such Double Trenches with lunetts before the gates are at Old Sarum & at Yarnbury-Castle, Vespasians—Camp above Wiley; Stukely [*sic*] observes the same lunetts at Barbaca & some other old fortifications. Vaubon [*sic*] & other Modern Engineers are known by their Way of fortifying. Where wee meet with simular [*sic*] Methods either of Civill or Military Architecture wee may judg them to be of the same



Strachey's plan of Maesbury Castle showing the 'lunetts' and road system. In the top right hand corner, Stone Beacon. Strachey must have been somewhat disorientated at the time he made this sketch: For 'north' read 'west' and for 'south' read 'east'. (Copyright: The British Library).

persons designing. Tis true the Lunetts both at Salisbury [~~lisbury~~ crossed out and 'rum' inserted. In the margin 'old Sarum'] & Yarn-bury are Larger, even Capable to Lodg a Body of Men. The Ditches at Old Sarum vastly deeper, & both that and Yarnbury Circular, which might be more agreeable to ye ground, but ye Method of Double Trenches & Lunetts are just ye same in all Three. As to the name, thô now called Marks-bury, I rather take it to be Maesbury from ye Saxon *Maze* or *Intricate*, as we say of a man in a maze when he knows not which way to goe. Wee have another Instance of this in Mesknole another fortification on the East part of Dundry hill four mile south of Bristol. The Saxons turned most of the Roman *castra* into Berry, Burgh, Borough, Bergh, and Brough, all from ye Same Primitive Burie, to Cover, hide or Shelter. So a Barow, in this Country a Tumulus or Hill over ye Dead, Buryed or Covered there, The Eye-Brough & ye Brough of an hill are ye Covers or Shelters of ye Eye or Hill, Borow or Burgh & Bery, 'a fenced town or shelter as Peterborow, Canterbury, Salisbury, & c: & Norden Observes Gentlemans Seats are in Middx. & Hertford call'd Berys being in ye same sense Covers, Shelters or defences for man & c as Conyborows for Rabbetts [This last clause interlined]. The Saxon name is no Argument that ye Place was not Roman, for so they changed Sorbiodunum into Salisbury, & Camalet in this County (undoubtedly Roman) is now Cadbury Castle. But the foss Way Running about a mile South-East is farther argument that this is a Roman Work. I have just touched this in ye Draught above, thô I could not give it its due distance. The fosse passeth close by a large Tumulus on which is a Stone about 7 feet high and 2 feet Square which has since served as a Beacon & close by this a Road Strikes off from ye foss directly to this Castle, which thô ye farthest about is Still the Better way and at present made use of when ye Strait road from Wells to Frome is deep after Wett weather.

It is interesting that Maesbury was still called Marksbury in Strachey's day. 'Merkesburi' was already a landmark in 702 when it was one of the boundaries of the Pilton estate granted by Ine, King of the West Saxons, to Beorhwald, Abbot of Glastonbury, (G.B. Grundy, *The Saxon Charters of Somerset*, p. 28). As to the etymology of the word, Grundy prefers 'boundary camp' to Strachey's 'maze' (a camp less intricate that Maesbury is difficult to imagine). St. George Gray opts for 'field fort' while Ekwall (*Oxford Dictionary of English Place-Names*, p. 300) suggests it is Maerec's bury from an English personal name. William Worcestre called Measbury 'Castellum Merkysbery' and recounts

how it was built by the giant Merk from whose ruined castle 100,000 cart-loads of stone remained. (*Itineraries*, edited by J.H. Harvey, p. 293).

C.H. Bothamley observed traces of one of the lunetts, or crescent-shaped advance works, beyond the south-east entrance in 1911 (*Victoria County History of Somerset*, II, p. 491). St. George Gray, who described the earthworks in detail in the *Proceedings of the Somerset Archaeological Society*, (volume 79, pp. xvii—xxii) computes the space within the ramparts as $6\frac{3}{4}$ acres. Strachey adopted the spelling Maesbury on his map. Later cartographers followed his lead with minor variations. Emanuel Bowen's Improved Map of the County of Somerset in 1750 spells it Measbury and Day and Masters in 1782 Masberry, a version followed by Collinson (*History and Antiquities of Somerset*) in 1791 and the first edition Ordnance Survey Map in 1817. Strachey gives the earliest description of the mysterious Stone Beacon on Beacon Hill in Doultling parish which, Collinson (III, p. 473) recorded, served 'as a sea-mark, being seen from a vast distance by mariners navigating the coast.'

Pointer did not receive the benefit of Strachey's knowledge of South Cadbury Castle which is only mentioned in passing. Fortunately he wrote it up in his fair copy of the proposed 'Somersetshire Illustrated' (Somerset Record Office DD/SH 108). The account is similar to that in *Itinerarium Curiosum*, p. 142, Stukeley's description being almost certainly 'from information from Mr. Strachey.'

Camalet. Thô ye Name is Unknown to ye County People who call it only Cadbury Castle Yet its Celebrated by Antiquarys [*sic*]. Leland describes it with an Extasy of Admiration both of Art & Nature. The Author of the Additions to Cambden from ye Neareness of ye Name ye Nature of ye place & all the Signes of a Roman Station Enclines to believe it was the Camielodumum Setled [*sic*] by Ostorius when he return'd again to finish ye reduction of ye Cangî from which he had been diverted by the commotions of ye Brigantes. It is an hill of a Steep Ascent [in the?] Parish of S. Cadbury between that & Queen Camell a Mile in Compass at ye Bottom Surrounded by a Triple [this crossed through and 'Four' substituted] Rampart of great Stones Covered with Earth & 4 Trenches one above the Other. The Top is an Area of 20 Acres or more Squarish but rounded at ye Angles Conformable to ye Shape of ye hill. [This sentence is crossed out. In the margin against it is written 'Musgrave', indicating a quotation from that antiquary's *Antiquitates Britanno-Belgicae* but apparently taken direct from Stukeley's

Itinerarium Curiosum, p. 142, to whom it was probably originally given by Strachey]. The Lowermost rampart has a Slope of 20 yards Ye ditch round it 7 yds. broad. The 2d vallum is 40 Yards Ascent. Ye ditch round it 2 Yards. Only The 3d Rampart is 12 Yards Slope & its Ditch 7 Yds. wide. The 4th & Uppermost is 28 Yards Slope & is 1076 Yards in Compass within which is a ditch of 2 paces Wide. These are not taken in ye same part but where the height of each appear greatest. The Area at Top is Ovall & about 24 Acres. Other Authors describe it as a Triple Vallum & 4 ditches. Ye reason seems plain for ye Lowest or Glacis does Indeed seem naturall thô in some places it may be a little Assisted by Art. Within this last ditch [here 'Stukely' is written in the margin, but this observation does not appear in *Itinerarium Curiosum*] ye ground is still higher & perhaps was the Praetorium, which the Inhabitants say was King Arthur's Palace. The Entrance to ye East is guarded with more ditches. There are 2 Small springs in ye Sides. In ye 4th ditch is One Call'd Arthur's Well. Leland in his time Observed ye foundations of Walls & much Disky blew Stone & Selden in his Notes on *Poliolbrion* writes it was full of ruins of old buildings. Here they often find round Pebble Stones a Peck at a time where as there are none Such in ye County ye People Suppose them stones to sling which fetched from ye sea. Besides Many Roman coyns found here Stow Tells us of a Silver horseshoe dug up there in Memory of his age & by a road Cross the feilds [*sic*] call'd King Arthur's hunting causey. Thô these Coyns & military Way are Certain Marks of the Romans Yet that is no Objection but it might also be a habitation or retreat of ye British Princes & whether it was ye Camulodunum of Ostorius or the Colomeae of Ravennas as Baxter Imagines or as Cambden from the name Caer Calemion in Niomius his Catalogue or Cathbregon, (*Britannia*, p. 221) it might in its order be made use of by Brittons Romans and Saxon for ye Same Interest [?] It hath of Late Years been a park & Enclosed at ye foot with a Stone Wall. The Country peopl [*sic*] positively Affirm that ye hill within 30 Years past is Sank 50 feet.

We return to Strachey's letter to Pointer:

f.27 Revd. Sr.

I promised you the Draught of some *old fortifications* but I could not find time to Correct a former Sketch till last week & now I send it to make a beginning. They are Certainly very Antient because neither Record or

Tradition give any light what they Were. The name *Berrie* or *Berry* is Certainly Saxon, but why 3 together [*sic*] of ye Same People? The Roman Coyns thō found at near half a mile distant would induce a beleif [*sic*] they were Roman. At least one of them. I can not think Tedbury Roman. The Circular stones with ye Altar or Cove & such Pitts I do not remember to have mett with in their Camps for which reason (I mean the pitts — interlined) I can not allow Newberry to be Roman. Such Circular stones are common in Celtic & Danish Monuments & such Pitts as these which fortify a part of this work Called Newbery, are seen in Clusters at Pen in this County, [see Appendix] & a cluster of them without any Continued ditch are seen by Sir Bevil Granvil's monument at ye end of Lawnsdon near Bath. Its a mistake in some who say Roman Camps Were always Square. Old Sarum & Yarnbury Castle in Wiltshire, Camalet or Cadbury Castle in Somerseshire are Circular but Unquestionably Roman. Clorus'-Camp [Figsbury Ring] Near Clarendon is Ovall, & ye City of Bath & ye Summerstation on Claverton-down above it (Like these two of Wadberry & Tedbury) resemble a D. Exeter is the same figure. In a garden at fig 5 [on Strachey's plan of camps] Mr. Peirce found 2 Arrows beads of Brass or rather Copper, & I have the Socket for ye Plume of an Helmet found in ye Same place of Copper guilt very fresh and bright. I begin with these because *Tedbury* & part of *Newbery* [Wadberry crossed through] is on my own Mannor of Elm. The other part of *Newberry* & *Wadberry* belongs to Thomas Horner, Esq., Knight of ye Shire for this County. I last week took a sketch of an old moted [*sic*] castle Called Romans Mount said to be King Alfreds. I have severall more Sketches by me. As soon as I can draw them out will communicate them, who am Sir,

Your Most Obliged Humble Servant

John Strachey

Broadstreet in Bath May 6th

1730

[Postcript]

Wadberry seems to me to bidd fairest for a Roman Camp. The Praetorium & forum set off in ye most Eminent Part of it Induce me to think so. But Wadbury so much personally the Saxon Woden that something Staggers me, unless the Saxons afterwards made Use of it & New Named it. The Coyns were found nearer to Tedbury bearing toward ye

Corner of ye Paper at O but farther distant than ye Paper would allow.

- f.27 Reverse. Endorsed: These are ye minutes [i.e. the heads of his reply] of Mr. *Pointer's* letter dated May 20, 1730, to Mr. Strachey; which is mentioned, and indeed answered, in Strachey's 2d letter q.v. J.L.

A Description of Marksbury, Newbury, Wadbury & Tedbury Camps in Somersetshire.

These might all be made fitt by ye Romans, & afterwards passess'd by the Saxons, thō not all at the same time by reason of their nearness to one another.

The semi-circular figure of some of 'em might be suited to the Situation of the Places, the Situation perhaps not allowing of any other figure.

The Pitts in the Entrenchments of Newbury-Camp might be to hold Water for the Army.

I find no Entrance to Wadbury Camp.

The strong Rampier, Deep Ditch & Covert-way to the said Camp, might be for greater Security, being a Way perhaps easiest of access by the Enemy.

The Lunettes before ye Camps I take to be for guards & Sentinels.

The Circles of Stones in Tedbury Camp might be ye foundations of the Officers Tents, & that of 115 Paces Diameter in ye front of all the rest, the Foundations of ye Praetorian Tent.

I want to know [crossed through] Ye distance of the Foss-way from Marksbury Camp—[illegible word perhaps i.e.] a Mile. (annotation: q. ? v. Strachey's 2d letter).

The distance from Tedbury-Camp from [crossed out] to the Place where the Coins were found—How far off is . . . [crossed out].

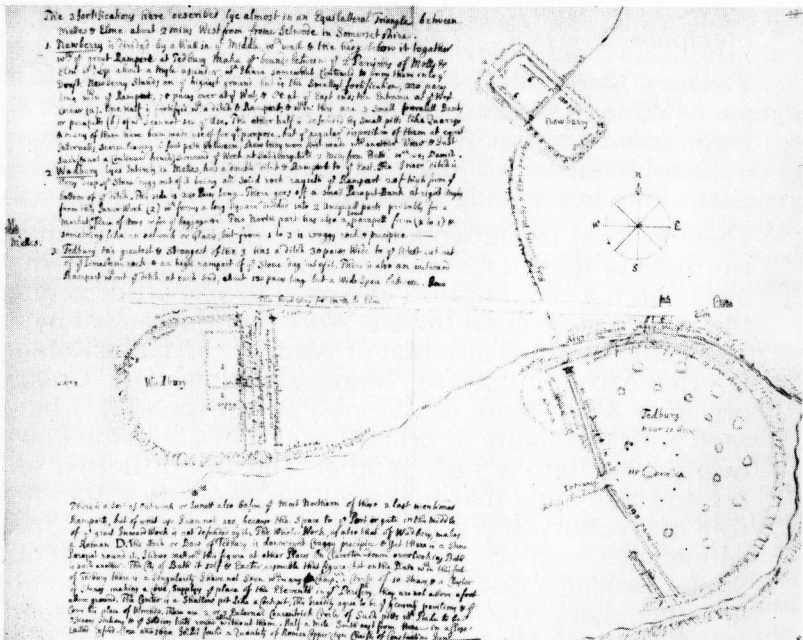
Two fragments of *Pointer's* original letter survive among the Strachey muniments in the Somerset Record Office (DD/SH 305/306). The letter has split along one of the folds and a side of each sheet is missing. It is written from Merton College, Oxford, adressed to Strachey at Broad Street, Bath and annotated by him 'Mr. Poynter 20 May 1730.' *Pointer* had 'receiv'd your very kind Presents of the . . . Description of the old Camps' with the 'greatest Pleasure & Satisfaction & inclined [to think] they might be all made at first by ye Romans.' *Pointer* finds the stone circles at Tedbury a 'puzzle' and expresses admiration for the drawings

'done with so much accuracy . . . pitty so much Pains should be lost & therefore . . . no design of publishing these Curious Draughts your self begs leave to make 'honorable mention' of Strachey in the next edition of his *Britannia Roma*. Pointer ends with protestations of gratitude for Strachey's generosity and hopes that 'some propitious Opportunity may [put it in my] Power to make a better Return.' DD/SH 305 is endorsed with notes for Strachey's reply and there are occasional annotations as against Pointer's suggestion that the pits at Newbury may have held water 'not possible . . . joynts', a point made in his answer.

f.28 Blank

f.29 [Includes a plan of Wadbury, Tedbury and Newbury in relation to each other.] The 3 fortifications here described lye almost in an Equilateral Triangle between Melles & Elme about 2 miles West from frome Selwode in Somersetshire.

1. Newberry is divided by a Wall in ye Middle, which wall & the hedg below it together [*sic*] with ye great Rampart at Tedbury Make ye bounds between ye 2 Parishes of Mellis & Elm which Lye about a Myle asunder, which I have



The Mellis Equilateral: The relative positions of Wadbury, Tedbury, and Newbury as sketched by John Strachey about 1730. (Copyright: The British Library).

somewhat contract'd to bring them into ye Draft. Newberry stands on ye highest ground but is the Smallest fortification, 220 Paces long within ye Rampart, 75 Paces over at ye West, & 85 at ye East end; ye Entrance at ye West Corner (a). One half is fortified with a ditch & Rampart, & within this are 2 Small paralell Banks or Parapetts (b) of which I can not see ye Use. The other half is defended by small pitts like Quarrys & many of them have been made use of for that purpose, but the regular disposition of them at equal Intervalls, Scarce leaving a foot path between shew they were first made with another View & just such (& not a Continued trench) Surround ye work at Salisbury-hill 2 Miles from Bath which was Danish.

2. *Wadbury* lyes Intirely in Melles, has a double ditch. Rampart to ye East. The Inner ditch is very deep. Ye Stone dugg out of it being all Solid rock rayseth ye Rampart 20 f high from ye bottom of ye ditch. This side is 240 Paces long. There goes off a small parapet Bank at right Angles from the Inner Work (2) which forms a long Square divided into 2 Unequall parts probably for a Market or place of Arms or for ye baggage & c: The North part has also a low parapett from (X to 1) & something like an outwork or Glacis, but from 1 to 3 is Craggy rock & precipice.
3. *Tedbury*, the greatest & Strongest of the 3 has a ditch 30 paces Wide to ye West cut out of ye Limestone rock & an high rampart of ye Stone dug out of it. There is also an outward Rampart without ye ditch at each end, about 120 paces long but a Wide space between.

There is a sort of Outwork or Lunett also before the most Northern of these 2 last mentioned Ramparts, but of what use I can not see, because ye Space to ye Port or gate in the Middle of ye great Inward Work is not defended by it. The whole Work, as also that of Wadbery, makes a Roman D. The Arch or Bow of Tedbury is downright Craggy precipice & Yet there is a Stone Parapet round it. I have Mett with this figure at other Places. On Claverton-down overlooking Bath is Such another. The City of Bath it self & Exeter resemble that figure but on the Plain within this fort of Tedbury there is a Singularity I have not Seen within any Camp viz. a Circle of 10 Stones, & a Cluster of Stones making a Cove, Supplyes ye place of the Eleventh in ye Periphery. They are not above a foot above ground. The Center is a shallow pit Like a Cockpit. This I readily agree to be ye General's pavilion & ye Cove his place of Worship. There are 2 or 3 External Concentrick Circles of

Such pits which I take to be Officers Stations & ye soldiers huts round about without them. Half a Mile South east from Here in a close called Egford-Close anno 1690 Jon Pil found a Quantity of Roman Copper Coyn chiefly of *Constantinus junior*.

In the rough draft of 'Somersetshire Illustrated' (S.R.O. DD/SH 107) under the parish of Buckland Dinham Strachey adds some traditional lore about Tedbury Camp and its relationship to the neighbouring barrows. The barrows in question are 'Madbarrow' (called Modbury in the Middle Ages and so marked on Strachey's map), now known as the Big Tree, a slight grassy rise beside the A362 from Buckland Dinham to Radstock (National Grid Reference 72725175), the vanished Barrow Hill Long Barrow (74925024) and the Murtry Hill Barrow (76285069). This last aroused much interest among antiquaries and was thoroughly excavated by St. George Gray in 1920 (P.S.A.S. vol. 67, 1, pp. 39—55). Sir Thomas Champneys, who improved and beautified the Orchardleigh Estate in the early 19th century, has long been suspected of having tastefully arranged the standing stones on the barrow in their present picturesque position. Strachey's account appears to finally exonerate him. The basic details about the barrows are to be found in L.V. Grinsell, *Somerset Barrows*, 11: North and East. Special Supplement to P.S.A.S., vol. 115, 1971). Murderbottom, now known as Murdercombe, is mentioned in the grant of Mellis to Earl Athelstan by King Edmund in 942, the bounds beginning at Todanberghe (Tedbury) and proceeding along the great ditch to 'Mordrancombe'. (G.B. Grundy, *Saxon Charters of Somerset*, p. 98). In 1825, the Revd. John Skinner, the antiquary of Camerton, traced 'the line of the Portway called Cock Road, descending the hill facing Buckland, which place it passed through, a little beyond the turnpike, and proceeded under Barrow Hill to the Roman Camp at Newbury . . .'

Hangman's Lane was presumably the name of the old lane, now reduced to a footpath which passes over Barrow Hill from Elm in a North-Westerly direction. This seems identical with Bristol Way. Strachey's remarks on the Portway and Lord Dinham's Walk are not completely clear. He refers to these roads twice more in his manuscript. In DD/SH 108 he says 'there is a raised way very visible from ye townhead of Bokeland hither (i.e. to Madbarrow) & a Causey all along ye down. Another goes on ye other side & is called ye Portway leading towards [*sic*] Radstock but by ye Inhabitants ye raised bank at Towne is called ye Lord Dinham's Walk.' In another note on DD/SH 107 he records: 'Madborough on Bokeland down is a large round Tumulus & the Way leading by it towards Radestok is called ye Portway.' It seems

that the ridgeway from Buckland to Radstock, now followed by the A362, was known as Lord Dinam's Walk from Buckland to Madbarrow after which it became known as the Portway. The Dinham's were Lords of Buckland from before 1180 until 1501. The pleasant name, Lord Dinam's Walk, may enshrine some folk memory of their riding this way to attend the Hundred Court and Sheriff's tourn at Madbarrow before they became non-resident lords.

At Madbarrow the Sherif's Turn [*sic*] is still kept which shows it a place of remark. Ye Way is also called Lord Dinam's Walk & leads to Bokelands (Buckland Dinham) town (and ?) Elm. But there is Another Barrow on ye Edg of the Parish towards Elm [Barrow Hill] where there is a large Stone 8 foot now Lying along. To this Barrow there also leads up the hill a raysed Road called Bristol Way. Tradition is that it was the Old road from Frome that came by Vales [Vallis] over ye river by Singer's Mill in Elm. There is likewise a 3d Barrow in ye Westfeild [this should read Eastfield] of Bokeland on ye Borders of Orchardly. [Murtry Hill Barrow]. This last is Composed of Small Stones but Turfed over. Some Years Agoe, (viz. about 1724 or 1725, interlined) Taking away Several loads to Mend ye highways the Workmen discovered the bones of a Large Man (& Several Smaller Skulls lying in a Sort of Chest having 2 great Rude Stones at head & feet, 2 side Stones & a Coverer. Some say a great no. of Bones). The Barrow is Ovall, has a Pit or hollow in ye top of ye remaining part of it and at ye East End are now remaining 2 Upright Stones about 8 feet high which if opened might probably discover such another Chest or Skeleton. These 3 Barrows Seem to bound ye Lordship of Bokeland, ye first from Kilmersden & Hemington, the 2 from Elm & this last from Orchardly.

There is an old Tradition that 2 Kings had a Battle, the one being possessed of ye hill, I presume Tedbury, made a great Slaughter of ye Other in Murders bottom which is under Tedbury from (?) rolling Stones Upon them & hanged ye Prisoners in Hangmans Lane whence they brought ye Stones & heaped [*sic*] them over ye dead in ye West feild Barow. There is nothing unlikely in this Story for on ye one hand ye Enemy might possess this bottom in order to assult ye Camp at Tedbury & be Slaughter'd by ye Stones from thence or a party from that fort coming for Water in this bottom might be cut to pieces by an Ambuscade on ye Counter Brough of ye hill this being out of Sight of ye Camps of Wadbury & Newbury which are on ye North.

We return again to the correspondence:

f.30 Endorsed No. 2

Sr

In your obliging letter 20 May you question if ye Semicircular figure of Some of them is not Owing to ye ground. I readily admit that Tedbury & Wadbury Would hardly bear any other figure But Masbury Castle on Mendip, Old Sarum & (Yarnbury herewith sent) & Severall others I have Seen as Clorus' his Camp near Clarendon of which Dr. Stukely has given a draft might have been Laid out Square or in any other figure if ye Ingineer had Thought fitt & therefore the Rules of fortifications among the Romans might & did vary in different ages thō in Lippsius' time they were Square as he Asserts or as Ingineers Now give Rules for Regular Pentagons, Hexagons &c: Yet there is Scarce a Regular fortification in Europe Du Mont, Vaubon, &c: have followed there own method, either in Opening the flanks & Angles & Shortning ye Lines of defence but have laid out their Bastions as the Nature of the ground would best permitt without regard to ye regularity of the Polygon.

The Pitts at Newberry Camp as in my former [letter], nor those I have mention'd to be simular at Salisbury hill near Batheaston, could not be for Water being in a Limestone rock full of Joynts which could never be made Serviceable for ye purpose. The foss Way is full a Mile & half if not 2 Myle distant from Masbury Camp.

The Great Circle of 115 Paces Diameter in Tedbury Camp is in ye centre of ye Camp.

The Shallow pitts like Cockpitts round it seem rather foundations of Officers Tents & the great Circle ye Place of Arms & Exercise or ye Cheif Officers pavilion Separat'd [*sic*] by these stones.

The Cheif entrance to Wadbury Camp is about ye Middle of ye Inner Rampire but ye Entrance to ye Ditch is at Each end of ye Outward Vallum which thereby serves as a Lunet to Cover the Main gate which Please to Correct as in the Margin.

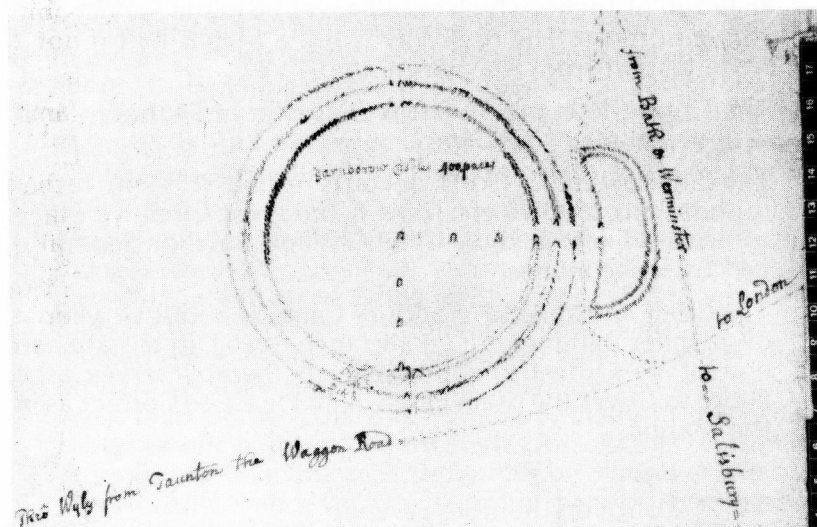
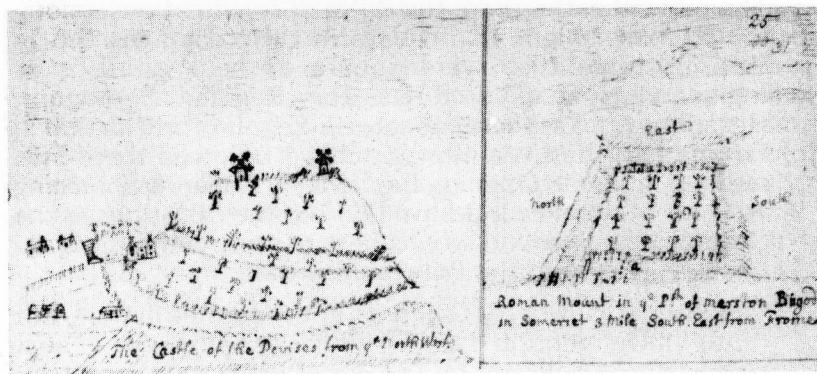
I am

Your very humble Servant

Jo. Strachey

f.30 (reverse)

1. The Castle of ye Devises in Wilts is thought by Cambden & others to be Roman. Its a Spiral Mount of almost perpendicular ascent if you Should Attempt it in a direct line mostly Natural but Art & Labour has added much to its Strength. In ye Raigne of King Stephen twas thought ye Strongest fortress in England where Maud ye Empress being Straitly beseiged was Carried out in a Coffin under pretence of a funerall & Made her Escape. It had then a stone building which Continued to ye Civill Warrs when Oliver Cromwell reduced it after a little Battering from an Adjoyning hill & Soon after demolished it so that there is



Assorted antiquities: Strachey's drawings of Devises Castle, Wiltshire, and Marston Moat, Somerset (top, left and right) and his plan of Yarnbury Castle, Wiltshire. (Copyright: The British Library).

now not left one Stone on another. But on the very top there is ye Pitt of the Late powder house which remained within Memory. Two Wind Mills on ye Top are a Late project for grinding Rape. There is an easy Ascent by a Spiral Walk Like that at Marlborow [Marlborough] Mount But neglected & quite out of repair. There is an indifferent good house just within ye Works at ye Bottom towards the Town Built out of ye Materials of ye Old Castle but now also going to decay. The Entrance to ye Town was on ye North over a draw bridg, now gone & ye ditch fill'd up at that place. The Whole is now an Orchard Within ye Works. The Roman Penates of which Dr. Musgrave has given a description in his *Belgium Brittan:* were not found in the Work but a Mile East from it. So ye Roman Coynes found at Elm were not in any of ye 3 Works (i.e. Tedbury, Wadbury, or Newbury) I there described but half a mile from the nearest of them. These Penates were very Mean & unartificial performances & are only Venerable for Antiquity.

2. Roman Mount is a Small fort or Sconce in ye Parish of Marston Bigot in Som'setshire. It's only 32 Paces Square within ye Work. Has a deep Moat round. In Emptying out ye Mud some Years Since were found Some Swords. I saw three: one a Backsword of A small Size but an Ell Long, a second is a two Edged Blade about a Yard Long, a third a two Edged dagger 2 feet Long, a brass hilt Chaced, the Blades all Excellent Tempered Mettall. At ye same time they took up ye Timbers of the draw bridg, Black & hard as Ebony. The Tradition is that it was a Castle of K. Alfred's & that he had a Battle at a Place Call'd Conquest Mead near it. There is an old fortification two Mile East from it on the Borders of Wilts Called Hurtlebury hill. But surely this place is too small to Contein above 100 men. I therefore am Enclined to Think it rather an Hunting Seat or Lodge within ye forrest of Selwode for in ye Perambulations of that forrest 25 Henry 3d The Bounds are Carryed *usp. domum Le Brook & desuper ad portam aula Dni. Regis* before Witham Park was enclosed & So by ye Hedg to Frome Water which I take to be the lane from Witham running by this place [the present Tuckmarsh Lane] which is about a furlong to ye East so by ye hedg to Bulsbridg [Bull's Bridge still extant] which is over frome river. Its in ye Lord Weymouth's Land.

Roman Mount is now known as Marston Moat and has survived relatively unscathed. It is now covered with almost impenetrable scrub and the moat is silted up. Although the site

has not been excavated, the Rev. John Collinson's suggestion (*History of Somerset*, v.2, p.214) that here stood the mediaeval manor house of Marston is an acceptable one. Strachey's account of Roman Mount has to be considered in conjunction with a second version which he prepared for his "Somersetshire Illustrated". His comment that the Mount seemed too small to contain more than 100 men refers to a local tradition which he recounts in his History. This provides yet another site for the Battle of Edington, Alfred the Great 'absconding' to Marston Moat and beseiging the Danes for 14 days at Roddenbury, a hill top camp two miles east on the borders of Somerset and Wiltshire near Longleat. Strachey debunks this story on the authority of Asser. He adds that the moat is 20 ft. deep (surely an exaggeration) and that 'there is not a Stone now remaining but the present possessor's father remembred [sic] Several foundations particularly a large oven of Brick & he made use of Several foundation Stones for the Walls of his house which stands about a 100 Yards from it & he beleives [sic] were antiently outhouses belonging to it & where are also Some Antient Moates'. This was Painter's Farm shown on the Marston Bigot Tithe Map in 1839 but which was later replaced by Moat Farm. Strachey enlarges on the beams of which there were two, of oak, seen in an adjoining malthouse. Also found during the cleansing of the moat were 'massy brass Hinges & as they told me a Coyn of Edw. the Confessor'. He concludes with a mention of the barrow in Conquest Mead by Smithick's Bridge (S.R.O. DD/SH 108).

The Roman Mount appears on Strachey's map of Somerset and from thence was transferred to Emanuel Bowen's map of the county published in 1750. Sir Richard Colt Hoare, of Stourhead, the historian of Wiltshire, saw it so marked and visited the Mount on 27 March, 1808, His verdict: 'It is only the relic of a moated mansion house'. (Wiltshire Record Office 383/932). Strachey makes a spirited attempt to throw some light on the exact boundaries of the Royal Forest of Selwood. However, the 'hall of the Lord King' was not here but at Brewham Lodge not far from the village of South Brewham which invalidates his conclusions. (See Michael McGarvie, *The Bounds of Selwood*, Frome Historical Research Group, 1978).

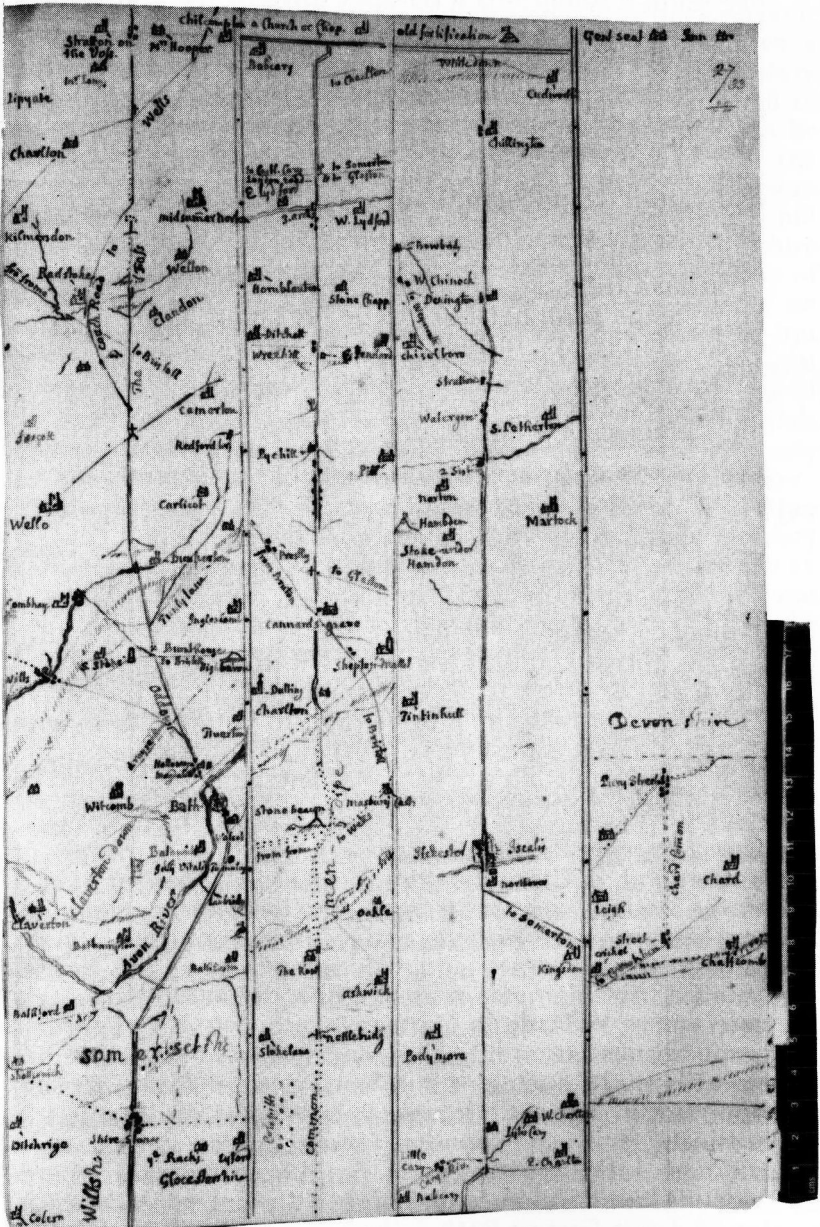
3. Yarnbury Castle. 2 Miles East from Wily Close on ye North of ye Road which goes thence to Ambersbury (Amesbury) & thence to London & Likewise Close on the West of ye Road from Warminster & Bath to Salisbury which Cross just under it. It is Circular 400 paces diameter within ye Inward Work & 2 Trenches & Rampires with a Lunett or Large half moon Before ye Eastern Entrance in both which circumstances it agreed with Old Sarum & therefore

perhaps had ye Same director. But this Lunett is Larger, has a ditch round it & a parapet towards the grand Work which is not so Common. There is a Stone about 2 feet high in the Centre & 3 others at right angles East & South from it at almost Equal distances. Take off a Canton or quarter of the Area no doubt for ye Praetorium. The Cheif [sic] Entrance is Eastward & 2 other Lesser Entrances or Sally Ports S & N. The circumjacent plain both of this & Old Sarum would Admitt any other figure so that its plain the Circular was here the Choice of the director. All writers I think agree its Roman. Cambden Ascribes it to Vespasian thô Some more Modern take ye Wall between Stonehenge & Ambersbury to be his Camp. There are two other Eminent Intrenchments Between Hatchbury [Heytesbury] & Warminster, One a double Square Called Scratsbury, the other Circular & double half a mile from the former called Battlebury.

The Foss Way from Stow on the Wold to Seaton.

- f.32 The Foss from Stow in the Wold in Gloucestershire [sic] runs in an high Ridge to North Leech which it leaves close on the East. Here Stukely traced ye Roman Station. So on to Cirencester, but near a Mile before it Enters That Town it meets Akemanstreet which comes from Whitney to a barrow above Tumulus [sic] above Burford & so by Crown allen [sic] & Strait to Cirencester whereat ye foss at ye Conjunction Makes an L to ye right to Enter ye town with it. As soon as it is past ye Town ye high ridg Appears again & at 4 Miles distance S.W. by a new built Alehouse The Coach road turns off thrô Tedbury [Tetbury] to Bath.

The foss for a little Way Bounds the Parishes of Nettlecomb in Gloucestershire [sic] Enters Somerset at ye 3 Shires Stones, which a Stranger may look for Long enough for they are Levell with ye road & Appear only like 3 round Paving Stones in a triangle [Strachey draws the figure] about a foot diameter & as much from Each other near a gate where Wansditch Crosses & about 40 Yards farther Some Stones set on Edg Like Meerstones run down ye hill toward Bath Easton Church. Then ye foss Crossing Bannesdon [Banner Down] & Leaving Salisbury [Little Solsbury] hill, an Eminent Entrenchment, on ye right winds a little Westward to Bath Easton Bridg where, Meeting the London road, it presently Enters Batheaston i.e. ye Town East of Bath & then by ye Place where Julius Vitalis' monument was found [near the London road in Walcot] (now placed in ye Grove behind ye Abby in Bath) it Enters Walcot i.e. Locus ad Vallum. Here as is



Strachey's plan of the route of the Foss Way from Gloucestershire to Devon projected on a linear principle. It begins bottom left and is continuous from the bottom. (Copyright: The British Library).

Observable at Ilchester & other Places is [sic] a Road Branches off to ye right to Avoyd ye Town & Either to go up launtdown [Lansdown] or by ye Brass Mills at Tiverton [Twerton] to Pass over ye River & So by ye hill Where ye Sheriffs turn is kept called Highboro falls into ye Main road again near Burnthouse. The Main road, however, Runns thrô ye City over ye Bridg up Holloway & near a New built Barn. Another road falls in with it which I traced Backward in an high Ridg near 20 f high on ye S. East side to Witcombe [Widcombe] Parsonage Poynting to Witcomb Church. On Claverton down in a line from this is a great Trench on Which ye Warren Wall is Now built & seems to make ye flat side of fortification in Shape of a Roman D near a Mile in Length & this ditch runs down ye hill towards Bathampton & I beleive [sic] is that which Dr. Tanner mistakes for ye foss when he says it Crosses ye river at Bathford. But ye foss would Make an acute L back from Bath Easton Bridg if it passed at Bathford. Indeed it is the Other Road from Verlucio [Sandy Lane] which Branches out here & leaves ye Town on ye West as the Above mentioned Branch of ye foss left it on ye Left or Else which I more Encline to beleive The Wansditch Winds round here from Salisbury hill & Makes the Communication with the fortification on Claverton down before mentioned & so by Inglescomb [Englishcombe] to Newton Park & Stantonsbury where it still carries ye Name as I shall one time or other Shew. But to return to ye foss. After This Road has Joyned it, it Crosses Oddown & Near Burnt-house receives the before Mentioned Branch which I traced also Backward [illegible word] an high ridge to the Tumulus aforesaid & to Tiverton [Twerton] Brass Mills.

When it has crossed ye Water besides ye former backway round Bath. There is Another in a high ridge also thrô Weston up Launsdon to ye fair place & is ye Road to Trajectum [an unidentified place between Bath and *Abonae*, Sea Mills in Avon]. But to return to ye foss which I left at Burnthouse. A little beyond an Old road Called Tunly Lane Branches off to ye West. Then the foss runs down to Dunkerton Bridg. About 2 Mile farther ye modern frequented road Strikes off to Radstock whilst ye foss runs Strait thrô a narrow gate & an high ridg Leaves a Large Tumulus Called Woodboro on ye East & then descends a very Stony & bad lane where a Streem [sic] of Water has Washed a Way ye Earth & ascends another as steep an hill where I take it to Shew its first & genuine form for being

now quite deserted ye Originall Pavement Appears very plain & Even for above a Mile. Its here ten feet high rounding on the Top & not above 6 feet Wide on the top. Soon after it Comes into Norton feild & ye Coach road which went round by Radstoke Joynes it again & it runns more Levell in a direct Line to Stratton which takes both its Name & destinction [sic] from it being Called Stratton on ye Voss Way according to ye Country Custom of Turning ye F to a V or, more properly Retaining ye Old Saxon pronunciation.

(Here the first page of the description of the Foss Way, which is on the reverse of f.32, ends. There is a note by Strachey: 'Read this Page 1st. & then turn backward').

From Stratton The foss runs Cross common full of Colepitts to Nettlebridge. Thence ascending another hill descends to another Rivulet & a place Called the Row. [Beech Row]. Leaving Ashwike Church $\frac{1}{2}$ a Mile on ye right & Stokelane [Stoke St. Michael] on ye Left Mounts Mendip to a Stone on a large Tumulus on the very Apex of ye hill serving for a Beacon called Stone Beacon [Beacon Hill]. It is about 6 feet high & 2 feet Square. This Stands in a direct line with ye road but ye foss takes a little turn to avoyd this Steep Summit & Leaves it scarce a furlong on ye Left. There are 3 of These Tumuli & there is a Trench or Line runs before them all on ye North Side but doth not Surround them. (But small trenches round ye Easton & Western ones—interlined) & hence there is a fine road Directly to ye South Entrance of Maesbury Castle which is a Mile & half to ye West. This is a double ovall Intrenchment of 9 Acres within ye Works which overlap each other on ye N. Entrance and have a Lunett before the Southern Port (of this I sent you a Draft) [Endorsed in another hand: v. No. 1].

The Foss descends hence to a village belonging to Shepton Mallett called Charlton between Dulting to ye East & Shepton to ye West & thence to Cannards Grave where 5 Roads meet viz. ye Great Road from Bristoll to Bruton & Weymouth, from Wells to this foss which a Mile $\frac{1}{2}$ farther gives Name to a Long Village Called Street. Before you come thither at ye bottom of a Craggy hill [Beard Hill] is a Milliarium [milestone] Carved with an Archtrave now used as an Upping stone [mounting block] about 2 feet high. Hence [from Cannards Grave] leaving Pill [Pylle] and Stone Chappell in view on ye right & Ditchet & Hornblawton on ye Left it proceeds to Lydford

Bridg & a little beyond it Crosses another Old Road which comes from ye end of Poldon hill giving name to Walton & Street, goes hence toward Castle Cary & Bruton & is now ye London road so far. Two mile from this Elm [sic] ye foss turns a little West & Crosses ye river Cary leaving Babcary & Little Cary [Cary Fitzpaine?] & Podimore on ye East & Lytes Cary & ye 2 Charltons & Kinsdon [Kingsdon] on ye West & enters Ivelchester (Iscalis). Here Stukely observed the old ford of flagg Stones Sett edgwise Still remaining going slantwise to ye lane on ye Backside of ye town which was ye town ditch & as I observed at Bath for ye Convenience of Such as would not go thrô ye Gareison. At Old Sarum I observed ye Like road passing by ye Lunett on ye outside of ye town. Hence at 2 Miles Leaving Tintinhull on ye East, the foss runns by Stoke under Hambden Close on ye Left & here a Ridge Equall to ye foss strikes out of it to ye Intrenchment on Hambden hill which I thence Conclude to be Roman. The foss runs on to Petherton Bridg Leaving Martock & South Petherton half a Mile on ye right. There are 2 female Statues lying on ye bank by this Bridg said to be 2 children drowned there which gave occasion to ye Rebuilding it. From thence ye name of ye foss is Soon lost. Ye present road runs thrô Watergare [Watergore] & Donnington [Dinnington] but about a mile from ye Bridg there is a place called Stratton about 2 furlongs to ye East of ye present road & I perceived a little ridge in ye Pastures Leading to it & am perswaded ye Old road was thrô these Enclosures & thrô Stratton & Leaving Chiselboro[ugh] & Hinton St. George on ye Left & Chillington Church on ye Right it Ascends White down & Crossing it & the London Road to Chard it Comes to Street & thence over Chard Common to Pury [Perry] Street as the names Imply & then Entring Devon runs on to Moridunum or Seaton. Dr. Musgraves Carryes it to Axium or Axminster then turns it to Honiton, Clist St. George, & Totness but this seems a different road which Crosses it there because it has another direction whereas the foss keeps a Due S. West Course even from Lincoln to Seaton never Varying unless to Climb an hill or Avoyd a Morass & then it Immediately recovers its former direction.

There is a similar, though cursory, account of the Foss from South Petherton to Seaton in *Itinerarium Curiosum*, p.148. Strachey's recovery of the route is substantially confirmed by Ivan Margary, *Roman Roads in Britain*, pp. 123-24, 125-127, 141-143, 150-151.

f.33 Sketch Map of the Foss Way.

APPENDIX

Strachey on Stanton Drew and Pen Pits, Somerset

Reference has already been made to John Strachey's visit, in the company of William Stukeley, to the stone circle at Stanton Drew (p.79). He also visited Pen Pits, being the first antiquary to describe them. According to Sir Richard Colt Hoare, the Wiltshire antiquary, who lived close to them at Stourhead, the pits numbered 20,000 and covered more than 700 acres. Strachey was clearly puzzled by them, but kept an open mind. His rough note (Somerset Record Office DD/SH 107), never edited or refined, reflects the thoughts of a man who had just seen the pits for the first time. Strachey picked up the tradition of an ancient 'city' in the vicinity, an idea which remained much in vogue in some quarters late into the 19th century. A pamphlet by Thomas Kerslake, of Bristol, on the subject grandly entitled *A Primaeval British Metropolis*, caused heated debate in the pages of *Notes and Queries for Somerset and Dorset* in 1891. This was seven years after General Pitt-Rivers and others had excavated the site for the Somerset Archaeological Society and found that 'these pits were never intended for the purpose of dwellings, but that they were the work of people who had dug in the surrounding high ground in search of the hard bed of greensand rock, for mill-stones, querns, or/and building operations'. (*Report on Excavations in the Pen Pits*, near Penselwood, Somerset, London, 1884).

Strachey's account of Stanton Drew is spirited. We catch a glimpse of his rudimentary field work as he locates the site of buried stones by crop mark and seeks confirmation by prodding the ground with his sword. He is astute enough to realize that the Cove is significant, a feature ignored by earlier antiquaries such as Aubrey and Musgrave, and despite his enthusiasm for pre-history, had the common sense to see that Drew was derived from Drogo (who in fact held Stanton in 1225) and not from the Druids as a later generation of antiquaries preferred. It is curious that Strachey, with his penchant for local tradition, does not mention the legend of Hauteville Quoit, supposed to have been thrown from Maesknoll, a mile away, by Sir John Hauteville, of Chew Magna. Sadly, most of his note is taken up with trying to prove that Stanton Drew was built by the Cangî, 'a people mention'd by Tacitus in these parts'. This has been omitted here. The account includes a rough plan (S.R.O. DD/SH 108).

Pen Pits

'This place by Tradition of ye Inhabitants was formerly a City. & ye names of High Street & Shambles Street are yet retained. 'Tis a very dry, healthy but Cold situation . . . its more difficult to determine ye meaning of that vast no. of Pitts which are in ye Common almost encircling this vill: were it not for the Prodigious no. a man would take them for only Quarrs but whereas all the Adjacent part could never use the 1000 part of stone that might have been dug in them. They must have been thrown up for other purposes & perhaps might be for ye Poor Brittain's for their situation in ye . . . Wars for I pass by ye Tradition of Pine Pitts for Pining men to death in them as ridiculous. In ye midst of ye river Stour . . . a little above Long Lane Mill is a stone the Boundary of the 3 Countyes [of Somerset, Wiltshire and Dorset].

Stanton Drew

Stanton Drew takes its name from one Drugo . . . The former Part of its name Stean or Stonetown from a remarkable monument of stones not altogether so large as those at Avery [Avebury] or Stonehenge but far Exceeding those at Rolrich [Rollright] in Oxfordshire, but so Intermixt with Hedges & Inclosures & distant from a great road that they have not been so much taken notice of by Antiquaries. It Consists of 3 distinct Circular Monuments, A Cove of 3 Stones Separate from ye rest to ye West & a King Stolen [sic] or Single Stone Call'd Hautvills Coyt on ye no. 3 or 400 Yards off & on ye other Side of ye riv'r Chew. Several of these Stones have of Late Years been Undermined, thrown down & buryed by one John Cowly tenant on ye farm where they stand. But ye Parched grass over them in dry Weather plainly discover where they lye as I proved by thrusting down my Sword to several of them. This Greater Circle is Composed (?) of Stones about 8 feet high as much broad & 4 feet thick, ye flat or broad side of those that are standing fronting ye Center. Another Quintuple Circle is much less in Circumference ye Innermost of 8 Cylindricall Stones 9 f. high & 21 in girt [h], a Third of 12 Stones of Irregular Unequal Sizes all lying flat bears proportion In periphery to ye diameter of ye Large one. The Scituation of ye Whole I refer to ye Plan.

As to ye Idle Story that these were the Company of a Wedding promiscuously dancing on a Sunday with the Parson, fiddlers & Clerk all Turn'd into Stone I shall only

observe that they are more Antient than Christianity itself in this Island & Consequently that Such Sabaturian novelty, [sic] but that as one great flat Stone here is Call'd Hautvils Coyt so belonging to ye Monument at Avery & also at Stonehenge are ye Devills Coyts which last seem given by Christians perhaps in detestation to them as Altars belonging to Temples of Heathen gods. Hence however I conclude that these sort of Monument having many things Simular were all for ye like purpose & if Stonehenge, & c : Were Temples this also was one, & if Stonehenge Was a Sepulchral Monument this also was of ye Same kind & Why not both Viz: Temples Erected near the Burial places in Memory of some battle there gained?