# EARL'S HILL, PONTESBURY AND RELATED HILLFORTS IN ENGLAND AND WALES

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The purpose of this paper[1] is to give a detailed account of the various earthworks on Earl's Hill, near Pontesbury in Shropshire, and to consider their relationship to similar works in England and Wales. The complex consists of (1) a hillfort on the highest part of the hill, (2) an annexe or extension to the south-west at a slightly lower level, (3 and 4) two detached groups of earthworks to the north-west, likewise at a lower level, and, finally, (5) a small oval enclosure with multiple defences situated on a spur to the north of and 400 ft. below the main hillfort and the convex northern slope of the hill. Because of the convexity of this slope the two enclosures are not visible from each other.

Pontesbury lies about seven miles south-west of Shrewsbury and the hill on which the complex is sited is about a mile to the south-east of the village. The hill is roughly oval in shape with the long axis running approximately north and south (Fig.1); it rises steeply from 600 ft. to a maximum of 1,047 ft. within the main hillfort. At the level of the 600 ft. contour the hill is slightly less than a mile from north to south, and about half this from east to west. Earthworks 1, 2, 3 and 4 are situated, for the most part, above the 900 ft. contour. The small oval enclosure, earthwork 5, is on a spur or promontory between the 500 and 600 ft. contours. The only easy approach is on the western side where a modern footpath rises from south-west to north-east up a steep-sided coombe. At the head of the coombe, and defined by the 900 ft. contour, is a terrace or platform, below and to the north-west of the main hillfort, where earthworks 3 and 4 are situated. The slopes on the eastern side of the hill are extremely steep and those on the other sides only slightly less so. The hill stands out prominently from its surroundings and was an obvious choice for a defensive work.

*The Main Hillfort* (1)

The hillfort occupying the crown of the hill (Fig. 2) is roughly oval on plan aligned approximately N.N.E.–S.S.W. Its overall length is 790 ft. and the length of the enclosed area is 690 ft. Its width is more difficult to state since there are no artificial defences on the eastern side, but the maximum width from inside the western rampart to the head of the natural slope on the east is about 250 ft. The area enclosed is about 3 acres and the overall area about $3\frac{3}{4}$ acres, the defences occupying $\frac{3}{4}$ of an acre on the northern, western and southern sides. On the western side the man-made defences consist of a rampart, an outer ditch or a berm and, in one place, a counterscarp bank. It is difficult to decide whether the berm is a silted-up ditch or simply a ledge produced by scarping below the main rampart. Because of the very steep natural slope

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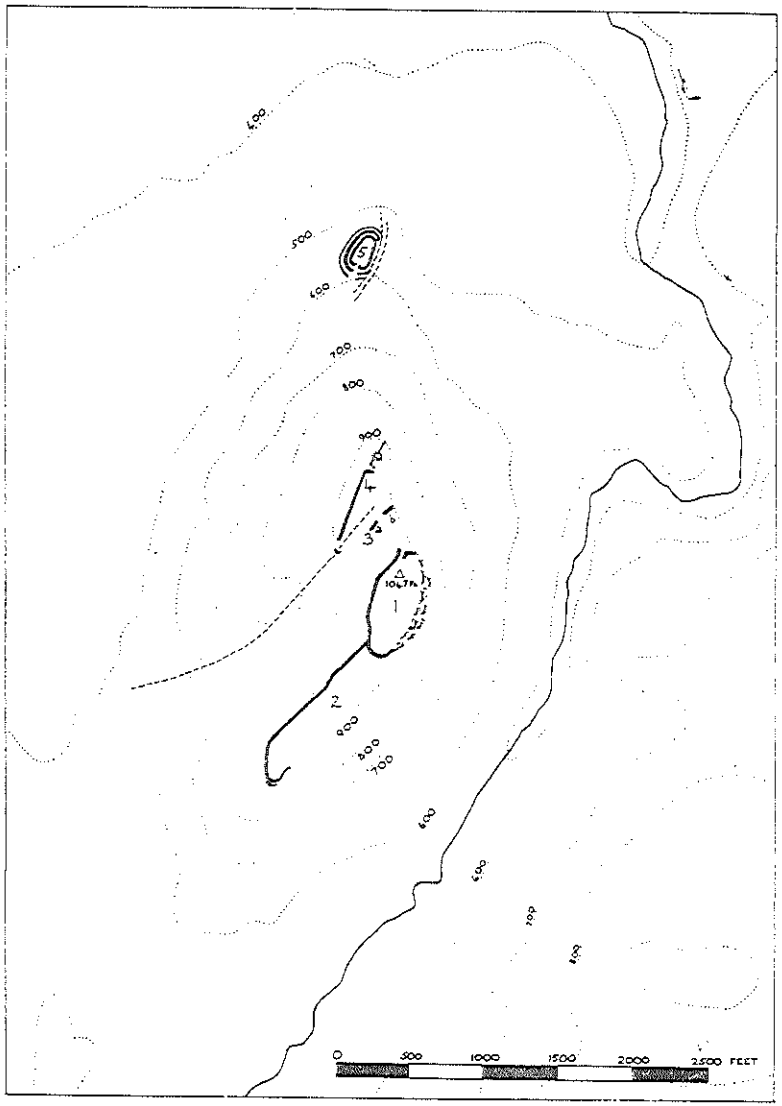


Fig. 1. General Plan of Earl's Hill with Earthworks 1–5

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even slight scarping would produce a very adequate 'glacis' rampart with the scarped material dumped at the top to add to its height. The nature of the remains in the area below the main scarp may, in fact, reflect three different treatments. It is noticeable that the counterscarp bank is at the northern end, adjacent to the main entrance, where the natural slope is less steep than elsewhere along the western side. As the natural slope becomes steeper the ditch and counterscarp bank are succeeded by a ditch alone. Further south again, where the natural slope is very steep, the ditch gives way to a ledge or berm which runs along most of the western side. The suggestion of three different treatments may find some support in the fact that where there are outer ditches there are also well-marked inner scarps to the main rampart, as if the greater amount of material derived from the ditch enabled the defences to be built up well above the level of the interior. At the northern end of the hillfort the ditch is in three separate sections with causeways left unexcavated between them. This is normally interpreted as a sign of unfinished work and it may well be that the digging of the outer ditches represents an attempt to strengthen existing defences and is not simply a variation of the original treatment. This point will be considered again when the relationship of the various earthworks is discussed.

The main rampart rises between 3 ft. and 5 ft. above the interior at the northern and southern ends of the hillfort. There is a well-marked inner scarp inside the rampart to the east of the entrance and for about 150 ft. south of the entrance on the western side. South of this again, for about 300 ft., there is only the slightest suggestion of an inner scarp and it seems unlikely that the rampart ever rose more than a foot or two above the interior. This section corresponds more or less with the section at the foot of the outer scarp where a simple ledge takes the place of the ditches to north and south. The inner scarp is resumed about 250 ft. from the southern end of the enclosed area and continues around the end of the hillfort to the point on the eastern side where the man-made defences cease. The outer slope of the main rampart is still very steep and difficult to climb and in its original state must have presented a formidable obstacle. Its present vertical height varies between 15 ft. and 20 ft. In one or two places rocky outcrop has been incorporated in the defences, the main part of the rampart riding above the rock face, the ledge or ditch running below. There is no surface indication of the type of rampart involved — 'glacis' or revetted. The ledge at the foot of the central section of the western rampart varies from as little as 2 ft. to as much as 15 ft. in width. Beyond the ledge the ground slopes steeply downwards for several hundred feet until it reaches the track which rises up the coombe from the south-west. The stretch of ditch adjacent to the entrance is 4 ft. deep below the crest of the counterscarp bank and about 110 ft. long. The northern half of the counterscarp bank is much more massive than the remainder and about 20 ft. wide overall. To the south of this section there is a sloping platform for about 30 ft. which is succeeded by another stretch of ditch about 70 ft. long. Because it has no flanking counterscarp bank this appears somewhat shallower than the section already described but, in fact, its dimensions are otherwise not very much different; it is about 2 ft. deep and 2 ft. or 3 ft. across the bottom. South of



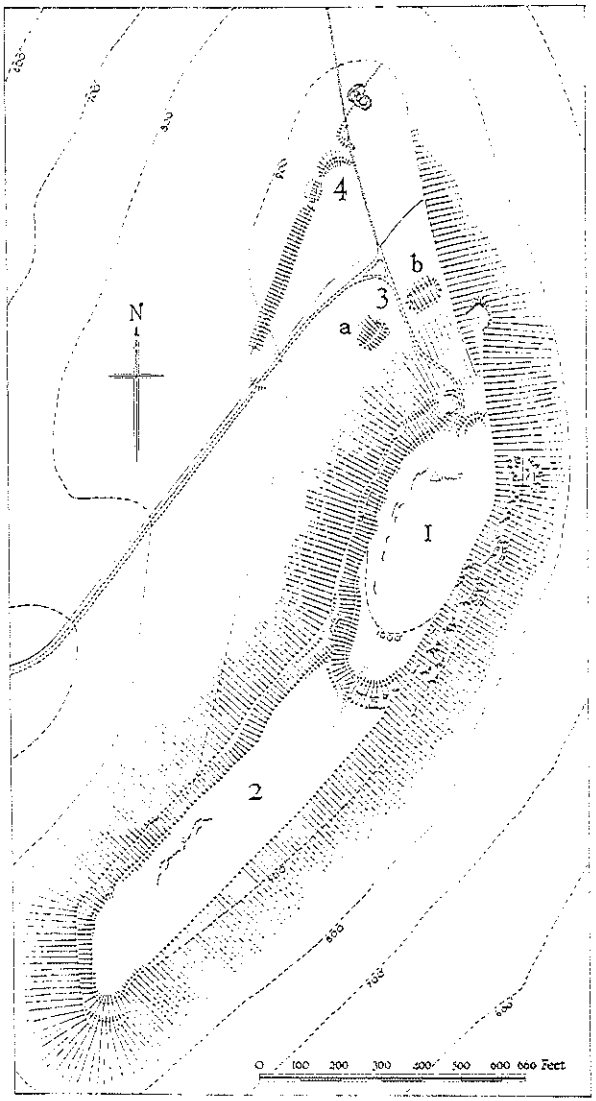


Fig. 2. Earl's Hill, Pontesbury: 1, Main Hillfort; 2, Annexe; 3, Short Ditches; 4, Outer Bank

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this again is a shorter and shallower section of ditch, about 25 ft. long, which is succeeded by the ledge already described. About 170 ft. north of the junction with the annexe the main rampart swings inwards, possibly in order to ride well above the 50 ft. section of outcrop which occurs at this point. Where it swings inwards there is a 90 ft. length of ditch. Beyond the annexe junction, where the defences curve around the southern end of the hillfort, the arrangements are generally similar. There is a massive bank rising 3 to 5 ft. above the interior and falling about 20 ft. to the ditch bottom, about 4 ft. below external ground level; no trace of a counterscarp bank exists. The ditch fades out as it reaches the head of the natural slope on the eastern side and the rampart continues for about another 50 ft. For a distance of 650 ft. along the eastern side the ground falls very steeply to the river below. There are frequent, massive outcrops of rock with near-vertical outer faces which together with the long steep slopes below them made any artificial defences quite unnecessary. Man-made defences are resumed at the northern end to seal the short gap between the entrance and the natural slope. This section of rampart is about 100 ft. long. About half of this length is taken up by the inturn which is rather low and very much spread, especially towards the interior. The rampart on the other (western) side of the entrance, instead of being inturned, is turned outwards so that it is parallel to the eastern inturn. It thus takes advantage of the outcrop immediately to the north which adds considerably to its effective height. The result is a very impressive bastion to the west of the entrance cutting down the angle of approach to about 90°. Although simple in plan the entrance is very strong. The area immediately outside it is enclosed on three sides: by the out-turned rampart to the west; by the short length of rampart (east of the entrance) to the south; and by the steep natural slope to the east. The distance between the out-turn and the natural slope is only 75 ft. Any attacking force would have to pass through this area to get anywhere near the gates which must have been set somewhere between the inturned and out-turned ramparts. North-west of the entrance the ground slopes downwards fairly steeply for a distance of about 250 ft. and then levels off just beyond the short ditches (earthwork 3). The interior of the hillfort is domed so that there is no clear view across except at the southern end. The highest point (1,047 ft.) is at the northern end, about 150 ft. S.S.W. of the entrance. The ground falls gently to the south until near the southern end it is below the crest of the rampart. The ramparts are situated in the region of the 1,000 ft. contour, slightly above it at the northern end, slightly below it at the southern end.

*The Annexe* (2)

The annexe occupies a tongue of land, defined for the most part by the 900 ft. contour, running south-west from the main hillfort. On three sides, west, north-west and south-east, the ground slopes away steeply for over 300 ft. Within the annexe the ground falls from north-east to south-west, from just below 1,000 ft. to about 900 ft. For the greater part of the south-eastern side there are no artificial defences whatsoever, the steep slope with the river below presumably being considered, as in the case of the main hillfort, adequate



defence. On the western and north-western sides the defences are similar to those on the western side of the main hillfort. The principal scarp is 15 to 20 ft. high with a ledge between 5 and 15 ft. in width at the foot. An inner scarp, 3 to 4 ft. high, exists in only one or two places. The only change in this pattern is at the southern angle where there are additional outer works. These take the form of a ditch at the foot of the main scarp, an outer bank and an outer ditch running in an arc for about 100 ft. around the southern end of the annexe. Beyond these features on the south-eastern side is a short length of rampart immediately followed by the steep natural slope. The north-west rampart impinges on the western rampart of the hillfort just before the latter begins to curve round to the east to cross the ridge. The annexe rampart merges into the hillfort rampart about 10 ft. below the crest of the latter. South of the junction is the outer ditch of the southern end of the hillfort. Without excavation it is impossible to be certain of the relationship of these two features which would indicate the chronological relationship of the hillfort and the annexe. This question will be discussed in a later section. The area within the annexe measures about 900 ft. by 200 ft. or about 4 acres, bigger in fact than the main hillfort. This size is, however, dictated by the nature of the tongue of land rather than the desire or need to enclose a specific area. The outer scarp of the rampart in the neighbourhood of the junction can be seen to fall into three parts. The upper and lower parts are at more or less the same rather steep angle, the part in between slightly less steep. It appears that the lower slope is due to scarping, the upper slope due to the heaping up of the scarped material at the head of the natural slope, while the less steep portion in between represents the undisturbed natural ground surface.

*The Short Ditches* (3)

Outside the entrance at the northern end of the hillfort the ground slopes down fairly steeply to the north-west. Near the foot of this slope and about 250 ft. from the entrance are two lengths of bank and ditch (earthworks 3a and 3b) about 75 ft. apart and on slightly different alignments. Earthwork 3a is 80 ft. long with an overall width of about 60 ft., while 3b is 90 ft. long with an overall width of about 70 ft. In relation to the hillfort above, the ditches are on the inside and the banks are, in fact, counterscarp banks. Because they are dug in part into the natural slope the most prominent aspect of these earthworks is the inner scarp of the ditch which in the case of 3b rises to 10 ft. above the ditch bottom and 6 ft. above the top of the counterscarp bank. The dimensions are slightly smaller for 3a but the inner scarp of the ditch is still considerably higher than the top of the accompanying bank. In both cases there is a faint suggestion of a bank on the inner side of the ditch; this can never have been a rampart and may well be the spoil from a marking-out ditch indicating the line the inner edge of the projected ditch was to take. As they now stand the two earthworks are of little or no defensive value and they probably represent a project which was never completed and which was, moreover, abandoned at an early stage. It seems reasonable to assume that the original project called for a line of defence running in an arc from the eastern end of 3b to a point

somewhere on the western side of and below the main hillfort. It is just possible that it was intended to link this rampart with the annexe but in view of the very long and steep slopes below the existing defences of the latter this would probably have been regarded as unnecessary. The further south the rampart was extended the less necessary it would become. An extension of only 200 or 300 ft. beyond the end of 3a would have been just as effective as a longer extension and, because of the steep slope, in little danger of being outflanked. Whatever the intended length of the work, its construction must have arisen from the desire of the builders to have closer command over the upper part of the coombe which carries the only reasonably graded track up to the platform-like area below 3a and 3b and the northern end of the hillfort. If, as seems likely, this earthwork is unfinished, the two parts probably represent the work of separate gangs and, allowing for the weathering of the ditch ends, the excavation of the 75 ft. space between would represent an equivalent amount of work. Consideration of this point leads to the question of access to the main hillfort *via* this earthwork. There are two possible positions for an entrance: the 75 ft. gap or the space, about 15 ft. wide, between the eastern end of 3b and the head of the steep natural slope. Of the two the latter seems the more likely, for if it was intended to place the entrance between 3a and 3b it would have been simpler to leave just the length needed for the causeway rather than a space of 75 ft. Moreover an entrance at the head of the natural slope would be considerably stronger and would cut down the angle of approach from 180° to 90°. The earthwork now consists of a counterscarp bank of slight defensive value and a ditch with an inner scarp about 25 ft. long and 10 ft. high. Even allowing for the silting of the ditch this would not represent a particularly strong defence; it therefore seems likely that the ditch and counterscarp bank were intended as part of a more complex system with an additional rampart on the inner edge of the ditch. The material for such a rampart (of whatever type it was, box or 'glacis') would presumably have been derived from an inner quarry ditch. The defences would then have been of the double out-throw type, of which the lower half, the only part completed, is represented by earthworks 3a and 3b.

*The Outer Bank* (4)

It is tempting to suggest that the fourth group of earthworks represents the remains of a scheme which superseded those just described. This possibility will be considered in a later section. The most prominent feature is a bank about 35 ft. wide and 550 ft. long, aligned N.N.E.–S.S.W. No trace exists of an accompanying ditch either inside or out. On the western, or external side, the bank is about 8 ft. high at the northern end and gradually reduces to about 5 ft. at the southern end. Beyond the latter to the south is a clear space of about 50 ft. and then a short, curving length of bank, now somewhat flattened, which sits squarely across the present track up the coombe. There is no surface evidence that the two banks were ever joined across the 50 ft. gap, but it seems likely that this was at least intended, even if the work was never completed. At the northern end the bank curves round to the east to form one side of an inturned entrance. This section of rampart is rather more massive than the



remainder. It is 45 ft. wide at its maximum, rises 4 ft. above the interior and falls externally about 8 ft. The other side of the entrance is represented by a very much slighter inturn, only a foot or so high. Beyond the entrance the rampart exists now as little more than a scarp which after about 100 ft. runs into the side of a mass of outcrop about 6 ft. high which it must have been intended to incorporate in the defences. Between the outcrop and the head of the natural slope beyond is a space of about 90 ft. There is only the vaguest suggestion of a rampart here and even this may be misleading. If there was ever a complete rampart here the material forming it has at some time been almost entirely removed. The alternative is that the rampart was never completed, at least in this section. Something must be said now about the probable function of this outer bank which faces slightly north of west, roughly parallel to the contour lines of the western side of the hill north of the coombe. Behind it, to the east, is more or less level ground; to the west the ground begins to slope down to the valley bottom over 400 ft. below. It looks as if the rampart was intended to guard against any hostile approach up the western slope. That the rampart was something more than a simple barrier is made clear by the existence of the inturned entrance. It is equally clear that the traffic for which the entrance was intended would certainly not come from the west. The only direction from which traffic would approach would be the south-west, *via* the coombe. The entrance must, therefore, have been provided to give access to the platform area to traffic coming from the latter. It follows, then, that before reaching the entrance such traffic was intended to pass along in front of (*i.e.* to the west of) the outer bank. In order to divert traffic in this way some sort of barrier across the track would be necessary and this may explain the existence of the curving length of bank noted above. To provide a really effective barrier it would have seemed logical to extend the rampart some way up the slope of the coombe to the east, but there is no surface evidence that this was done. This lack of evidence may be due to the same factors responsible for the existing 50 ft. gap on the western side of the track, whatever they were. Whether intentional or otherwise, the construction of the outer bank did, in fact, produce a roughly triangular and more or less level area within the defences but outside and below the main hillfort. This may have been utilized as (or was, perhaps, originally intended as) a commercial area for the holding of markets or similar functions.

*The Oval Enclosure* (5)

The last earthwork of the Pontesbury complex to be considered is the oval enclosure, more than 300 ft. below the rest of the group. To the north, beyond the outer bank and the 900 ft. contour, the ground falls steeply in a convex slope forming the northern end of the hill on which the complex stands. Just beyond the 600 ft. contour the ground rises again in a slight knoll with steep slopes on its northern, western and eastern sides, falling to below 500 ft. This knoll is occupied by the oval enclosure. The most noticeable feature of this earthwork is the contrast between the area of the interior and the area occupied by the defences. The area enclosed is about $\frac{3}{4}$ of an acre, but the overall area

of the site, allowing for portions destroyed, is about 2¾ acres, so that the defensive works occupied no less than 2 acres. The defensive system seems to have consisted of an inner rampart, a berm, an outer rampart, an outer ditch and a counterscarp bank, although at no one point are all these features preserved together. Only at the northern end of the enclosed area is there any trace of an inner scarp. For the greater part of the circuit the inner rampart is represented by a single (outer) scarp about 8 ft. high vertically and about 18 ft. long. At the foot of this scarp, on the southern and north-western sides, is a berm about 20 ft. wide. There does not appear to have been a ditch between the inner and outer ramparts. Perhaps the greater part of the outer slope of the inner rampart was produced by scarping, leaving a platform at its foot. On the western and northern sides the outer edge of this berm is occupied by the rear of the outer rampart. The outer scarp of this rampart falls a vertical distance of about 14 ft. in a horizontal distance of about 35 ft., quite clearly the remains of a substantial rampart. At the foot of the scarp is a small ditch with a counterscarp bank beyond. The defences on the eastern side have been largely destroyed by a road built for forestry purposes, but they presumably followed much the same pattern as on the western side. The entrance is at the southern end, facing the steep northern slope of the upper part of the hill.

*Relationship of Earthworks 1–5*

One of the first points to be discussed must be the relationship to each other of the various earthworks forming the complex. These relationships can be of two kinds, tactical and chronological. In the absence of excavation little can be said with certainty about the latter; with so many separate pieces to the puzzle, as it were, the possibilities for speculation are almost infinite. Consideration of the tactical aspects, however, may go some way towards making good this weakness and may suggest the broad lines of a chronology which will form the basis of further investigation by means of excavation.

Earthwork No. 1 is a quite straightforward hillfort taking advantage of the crown of an isolated hill and making use of the steep natural slopes on its eastern side. The simplest interpretation of earthwork No. 2 is that it is an extension or annexe added to the original hillfort, either to provide additional space (possibly for cattle), or to fortify the spur which extends from the southern end of the main enclosure. There are, however, two other possibilities. The first is that the two works are contemporary and formed part of an original scheme which embraced two enclosures. The second is that the original hillfort occupied the area of present main enclosure and annexe combined and that the No. 1 earthwork represents a re-fortification of a more limited area of the hillfort at its higher, northern end. One or two features might be interpreted as supporting this suggestion. There is a general similarity between the defences of the two parts *except* where one would expect additional fortification in the event of the northern end of the original hillfort being re-used as postulated, *i.e.* near the entrance and in the region of the present junction between the two parts. There is no access from the annexe to the hillfort; the existing track is modern and the only other way in is to flank the rampart



to the east across steeply sloping ground which forms the eastern defence of the hill. In its present state it looks as if the curving rampart across the ridge was designed, if anything, to prevent access from the annexe to the main enclosure. Finally, the change of direction in the western rampart of the No. 1 enclosure may represent the point where a new rampart was super-imposed on an existing one. It is noticeable that there is a pronounced inner scarp from this point which continues down the remainder of the western side and around the southern end to the point where the artificial defences terminate. This could be the result of building the additional rampart on top of and behind the existing one or its remains. Whatever the relationship of the annexe and main enclosure it seems likely that between them they represent two phases at least. Two subsidiary features may represent additional (if minor) phases. The extra defences at the southern angle of the annexe may be evidence of another phase and the ditches at the northern end of the hillfort may, as already suggested, represent an attempt to strengthen existing defences.

The second of the two main phases suggested above may be contemporary with some or all of the earthworks on the northern end of the hill (*i.e.* Nos. 3, 4 and 5). If the annexe is, in fact, secondary to the upper enclosure then earthworks 2 to 5 could all be part of a single attempt to strengthen the defences of the hill at its northern and southern ends. However, it seems unlikely that earthworks 3, 4 and 5 formed part of a single scheme, even if all three were contemporary. It does seem likely, on the other hand, that simultaneous attempts were made to build additional defences on the northern and southern ends of the hill, so that the annexe, or the second phase, was probably part of a single scheme with any one, or two, of earthworks 3, 4 and 5. It was suggested above that the short ditches were unfinished. Either they were built to meet a danger which never materialised and were left unfinished in consequence, or else they were abandoned in favour of an alternative scheme. The topography, and the siting of earthwork No. 4, suggest that the second of these alternatives is the more likely. From either 3a or 3b it can be seen that No. 4 is situated where the dead ground begins. Presumably at an early stage in the building of the proposed rampart it was realised that there was dead ground only 300 or 400 ft. away, to the west and north-west, across a more or less level area, and earthwork No. 3 was abandoned in favour of earthwork No. 4. If this is so then 3 and 4 can be regarded as a single phase, probably contemporary with the second phase, whatever form that took, of the earthworks on the crown of the hill. As shown above the primary function of the outer bank, judging by its alignment, was apparently to guard against any approach up the western side of the hill north of the coombe. The greater part of the work is sited above the 900 ft. contour and to the west of it the ground falls over 400 ft. in a steep slope. In spite of its height, however, the rampart does not command an uninterrupted view of the slope below because of the convexity of the hillside which hides the lower slopes from view. There is, in fact, still dead ground beyond No. 4, in spite of the move forward from the position of No. 3, although the new siting is considerably more advantageous. The dead ground is much further away and lies, in any case, beyond a steep slope as compared

with the more or less level ground outside earthwork No. 3. Having, presumably, abandoned one work because of this defect it is unlikely that the builders would make the same mistake twice. The dead ground beyond No. 4 had to be accepted because of the convex nature of the slope. To cover the dead ground formed by the lower part of the slope it would have been necessary to push the outer bank so far downhill as to lose all connection with the main defences. Moreover, the further down the slope the rampart was placed the longer it would have to be. The acceptance of dead ground also enabled the rampart to be sited so as to deny to any attacker access to the platform area which would have been an ideal assembly point for a final assault on the main hillfort. This, as much as any other reason, may have been behind the move to abandon No. 3 in favour of No. 4.

The shortcomings of No. 4, unavoidable though they were, may have had something to do with the building of the last earthwork in the group, the oval enclosure (No. 5). Like the western slope of the hill, the northern slope is markedly convex and it was no doubt to guard against hidden approach from this direction that the lower enclosure was built. At the same time, from the lower enclosure it would be possible to observe much of the lower slope on the western side, the part not visible from earthwork No. 4 above. Thus between them earthworks Nos. 4 and 5 could cover the western (north of the coombe) and northern sides of the hill, from which directions the greatest danger could be expected. The two earthworks may be thus, at least in part, contemporary. It is feasible that they formed part of a single scheme made necessary by the nature of the western and northern slopes. If one is earlier it would appear to be No. 4, with No. 5 as a later addition to make good the deficiencies of the outer bank above. Whatever their chronological relationship, it is quite clear that in each case (4 and 5) some sort of defensive work was needed where they now stand. This necessity arises from (a) the convexity of the hill slopes, and (b) the existence of what are virtually two steps up to the top of the hill. The lower step is the site of the oval enclosure. This is out of sight of the upper works and would, if unoccupied, enable an attacking party to assemble unseen just over 300 ft. below the next step, the platform at the head of the coombe. Without earthwork No. 4 the same party — or a party coming up the western slope — could reach this platform at their own pace and for the greater part of the time out of sight of the main enclosure. The platform area would make a convenient place to halt and assemble forces, to recover from the steep climb and to prepare for the assault on the main hillfort now only 400 or 500 ft. away and only about 100 ft. higher up. If this were to be allowed to happen then all the advantages of siting the hillfort on top of a 1,000 ft. hill would be lost. Earthworks 4 and 5 denied the use of these steps to an attacker and overcame most of the disadvantages caused by the convex slopes. Earthworks 1 to 4 form a more or less coherent group and, apart from No. 1, would not make much sense independently. Earthwork No. 5, however, to the north of and well below the remainder of the group, resembles No. 1 rather than the others in this respect. Because of its relative remoteness it had to be capable of standing alone, hence the very strong defences. It is, in fact, a



miniature hillfort built as part of the defensive system of the main hillfort. It had a limited function (almost certainly a purely military one) in relation to the hillfort above and for this reason it can be termed a subsidiary or satellite hillfort; that such a site is not unique will be seen later.

This section of the discussion may be concluded with a brief outline of a possible chronology for the whole complex. It seems highly probable that the earliest structural events on the hill are represented by earthworks 1 and 2. If these two are not equally early then No. 1 (the upper enclosure) seems the more likely to represent the first phase. The second phase of the complex almost certainly embraces earthworks 3 and 4; and if 1 and 2 are not contemporary then it probably includes earthwork No. 2 as well, although it is possible that No. 2 by itself forms a second phase, with 3 and 4 as phase three. The subsidiary hillfort (No. 5) may form part of the same scheme as No. 4 and be contemporary with it, in either phase two or three, but in the writer's view the lower enclosure probably represents a separate and final phase of the system. This could be either phase three or four, depending on how the remainder of the features are grouped chronologically. Excluding minor sub-phases about which little can be said in this context, the chronology of the complex would appear to be made up of a minimum of two and a probable maximum of four or five phases (five if Nos. 3 and 4 represent separate phases). In the writer's view the balance of probability is in favour of three phases made up as follows: *Phase* I, the main hillfort (1); *Phase* II, the annexe, the short ditches and the outer bank (2, 3, 4); *Phase* III, the satellite hillfort (5).

## RELATED HILLFORTS IN ENGLAND AND WALES

The greater part of this section will be devoted to a consideration of satellite hillforts and their distribution, but one or two other points must be dealt with first. The various structural phases suggested above seem likely to have been brought about by events which affected not only Pontesbury but the whole of that section of the Welsh Marches in which it stands. Many sites in this area have been shown by excavation, or appear from their surface remains, to have had more than one structural phase. Old Oswestry, 20 miles N.N.W. of Pontesbury, has been shown by excavation to have had four structural phases,[1] and the same number was found at Ffridd Faldwyn, 10 miles W.S.W.[2] Caynham Camp, 20 miles S.S.E., also had four phases,[3] while the Wrekin, 15 miles to the east, had two.[4] The surface remains at other, unexcavated, Shropshire sites suggest that more than one structural phase is involved. These include Burrow Camp (Hopesay), Bury Ditches (Lydbury), Caer Caradoc (Clun), Caer Caradoc (Church Stretton), The Ditches (Rushbury) and Norton Camp (Culmington), all within a radius of about 15 miles of Pontesbury.[5]

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4 Kenyon, Miss K. M., 'Excavations on the Wrekin, Shropshire, 1939', *Arch. J.*, XCIX (1942), 99–109.
5 V.C.H., *Shropshire*, Vol. I (1908), 361–365, 373–4, 377.

While some phases may be confined to particular hillforts, the great majority appear likely to have formed part of a single chronological sequence of events. Without excavation it is impossible to place Pontesbury in its correct chronological position but there seems little doubt that its phases, whatever their number, formed part of this sequence. As already noted the entrance at the northern end of the main hillfort is of the inturn/out-turn type. This is a variation of the normal theme of double inturns, arising, in this case at least, from the topography of the northern end of the hill. The practice of turning either one or both ramparts outwards is, in any case, not unknown in this section of the Welsh Marches. At Ivington[1] and Aconbury[2] Camps (Herefordshire) the topography seems to have played some part in producing entrances not dissimilar to Pontesbury. In addition to these, there are good examples of inturn/out-turn entrances at Wall Hills[3] (Herefordshire), about 30 miles to the S.E., and Rushbury Ditches[4] (Shropshire), about 15 miles E.S.E. At Norton Camp[5] (Shropshire), about 13 miles S.S.E., both ramparts are outturned at one of the entrances.

The relationship of the annexe to the main hillfort at Pontesbury has been discussed above; only analogies will be considered here. Consideration will be confined to those sites in which main enclosure and annexe appear to be separate but contemporary features. Sites such as Maiden Castle[6] (Dorset) and Almondbury[7] (Yorkshire), in which the extension of the ramparts involved the elimination of the earlier enclosure as a separate entity, are not considered as true analogies. The nearest example to Pontesbury is the Wrekin[8] where, at the northern and southern ends of the hill, there are annexes below the level of the main enclosure. At the Herefordshire Beacon[9] long spurs to the south and north-east of the (presumably) original hillfort are defended by ramparts in much the same manner. In Gloucestershire the large promontory fort at Ring Hill has an apparently contemporary annexe to the east defended by a slighter rampart more than trebling the area enclosed.[10] Finally, the hillfort of Pen Dinas[11] at Aberystwyth has an annexe at a lower level to the north which must have performed a similar function to the one at Pontesbury.

The last point to be considered before the larger question of satellite hillforts is dealt with, and one which would appear to have some connection with it, is that of widely spaced ramparts. The abortive rampart represented by earthwork No. 3, and rampart No. 4, bring Pontesbury into this category. The additional ramparts produce an over-all plan not dissimilar to that of Prestonbury[12] in Devon. A recent survey has shown that hillforts with widely spaced ramparts have a markedly south-western distribution. They are found in South-west England and South Wales in the counties of Cornwall, Devon,

[1] R.C.H.M. (England), *Herefordshire*, Vol. III, 131–135.
[2] *Ibid.*, Vol. I, 13–14.
[3] *Ibid.*, Vol. II, 190–191.
[4] V.C.H., *Shropshire*, Vol. I (1908), 377.
[5] *Ibid.*, 373–4.
[6] Wheeler, R. E. M., *Maiden Castle, Dorset*, Society of Antiquaries Research Report No. 12 (1943), 36.
[7] Varley, *op. cit.*, 47, Fig. 2.
[8] Kenyon, *op. cit.*, 100, Fig. 1.
[9] R.C.H.M., *Herefordshire*, Vol. II, 55–57.
[10] O.S. 25 in. Map, Gloucestershire, sheet XLI, 6.
[11] Grid Ref., SN (22)/584803; O.S. " Sheet No. 127.
[12] Frere, S. S., *Problems of the Iron Age in Southern Britain*, University of London Institute of Archaeology (1961).



west Somerset, Carmarthen, Brecon, Glamorgan and Monmouth.[1] The survey did not extend much beyond these counties but there is, in fact, a scatter of hillforts with widely spaced ramparts throughout the Welsh Marches. These include Bredon Hill and Danes Camp (Worcestershire),[2] and Croft Ambrey, Risbury and Wapley Hill (Herefordshire).[3] Further north are Pontesbury itself, The Breiddin[4] (Montgomeryshire), Dinas Bran[5] (Denbighshire), and Moel Hiraddug[6] (Flintshire), extending the distribution to the northernmost part of the Marcher region. Still further north there are widely spaced ramparts at Almondbury[7] (Yorkshire) and Warton Crag[8] (Lancashire). This question of hillforts with widely spaced ramparts and their distribution will be taken up again when the distribution of hillforts with satellites is considered.

One of the most interesting aspects of the Pontesbury complex is the incorporation in the defensive system of a small but strongly defended hillfort, as a sort of satellite to the main fortress. This feature is not confined to Pontesbury; probably the best known analogies are the Breiddin (Montgomeryshire), Llanmelin (Monmouthshire), and Carn Goch (Carmarthenshire), but a number of others exist and these will also be considered.

*The Breiddin* (Figs. 3 and 6)

The Breiddin[9] is a very large hillfort about 10 miles north-west of Pontesbury, with the Severn on its northern and western sides. On the west, north-west and north it is defended by very steep natural slopes falling over 700 ft. to the valley below. Man-made defences are mainly confined to the south-eastern side and consist of two stone-revetted ramparts about 200 ft. apart, with a third, earthen, rampart and ditch for about 1,000 ft. north-east of the main entrance. Beyond the earthen rampart to the south-east the ground level rises again to form a small hill or knoll defined by the 1,000 ft. contour. It is on the southern slope of this hill that the subsidiary enclosure is situated, about 750 ft. south-east of the nearest point of the main hillfort. The hill, in fact, forms the central part of a platform-like area, defined by the 900 ft. contour, which flanks the hillfort to the south-east and which must have completely blocked the view in that direction. The excavator of the site, the late B. H. St. J. O'Neil, regarded this outer enclosure as a native settlement of the second to fourth centuries A.D., an exact counterpart of the semi-defended courtyard houses of Caernarvonshire;[10] this may well be so, but a few points which might suggest otherwise seem worth making.

1. The evidence for a Roman date is suggestive rather than conclusive and could, in any case, refer to the re-occupation of an existing site.
2. Structurally the site has little or nothing in common with Caerau Ancient Village in Caernarvonshire.

[1] Frere, *op. cit.*, 51 and Fig. 9.
[2] Frere, *op. cit.*, 51.
[3] R.C.H.M., *Herefordshire*, Vol. III, 14–15, 74, 185.
[4] O'Neil, B. H. St. J., 'Excavations at Breiddin Hill Camp, Montgomeryshire, 1933–35', *Arch. Camb.*, XCII (1937), 86–128.
[5] An outer rampart, about 150 ft. beyond the main rampart, noted by the writer in 1961. *Journal of the Flintshire Historical Society*, forthcoming.
[6] Davies, Ellis, *Prehistoric and Roman Remains of Flintshire*, Cardiff (1949), 96–99, Fig. 24.
[7] Varley, *op. cit.*, Fig. 2.
[8] V.C.H., *Lancashire*, Vol. II, 508–511.
[9] O'Neil, *op. cit.* Grid Ref., SJ (33)/293143.
[10] O'Neil, *op. cit.*, 109.

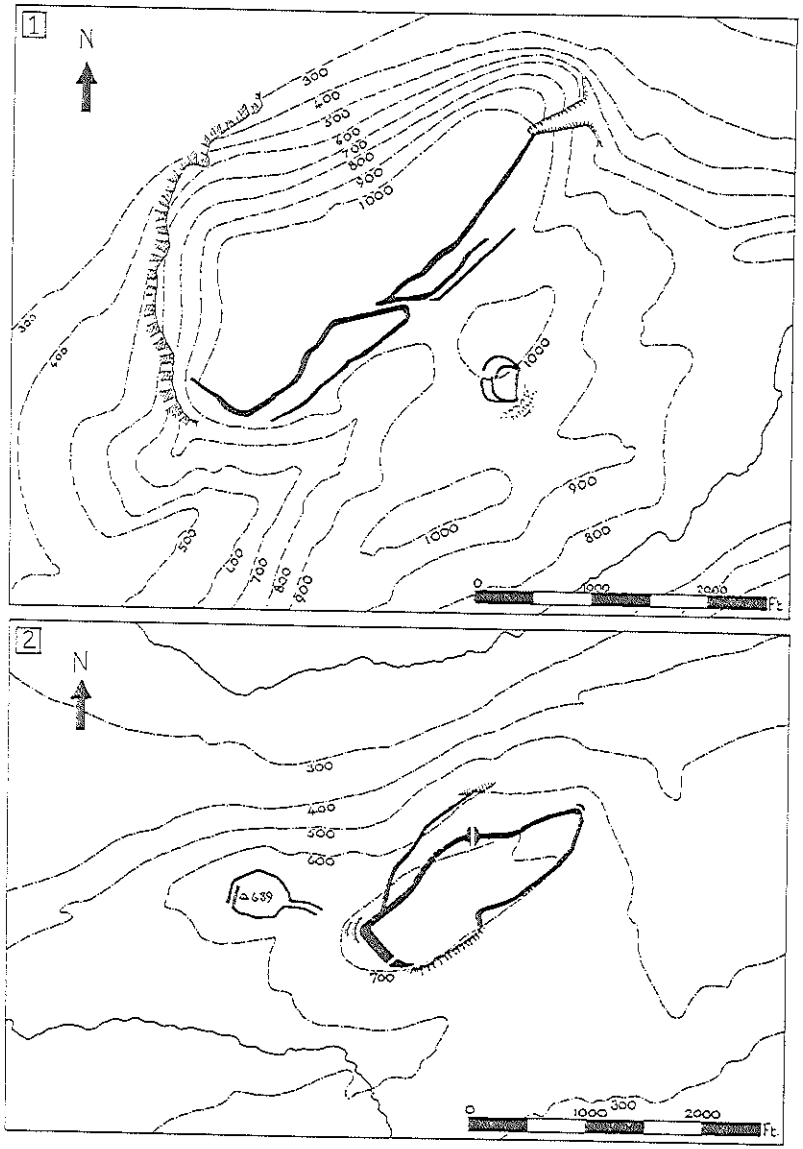


Fig. 3. 1. The Breiddin (Montgomery) 2. Carn Goch (Carmarthen)

*(Based on O.S. Maps, Crown Copyright reserved)*



3. The defences are of thorough-going hillfort type, consisting of a box rampart, a berm and a V-shaped ditch.
4. Moreover the box rampart (20 ft. thick) is of massive construction for a small native settlement and is comparable with the ramparts of the main hillfort and the ramparts of other major excavated sites (*e.g.*, the box rampart at Maiden Castle, Dorset, was 12 ft. thick).
5. If, for reasons of (Roman) security, the natives were required to leave a gap in any defensive work then there would appear to be no point in constructing such a massive rampart.

It is always difficult, and dangerous, to propose a re-interpretation of excavation evidence, but in this case, keeping in mind the points made above, it seems feasible to suggest that the site belongs, originally at least, to a period earlier than the second to fourth centuries A.D. What is suggested, in fact, is that this outer enclosure was originally a small, strongly defended (and possibly unfinished) hillfort, subsidiary to the main hillfort above, which was re-used during the second to fourth centuries as a native settlement. The topography of the area to the south-east of the hillfort makes some sort of outer work a desirable, if not a necessary, precaution. The lack of visibility in this direction, caused by the platform, has already been referred to. The two most noticeable features of this outer enclosure are the very small area enclosed by the very massive rampart and the siting not on the top of the hill but on the southern slope. The first of these suggests that military and not domestic needs were paramount and that this was an outpost where strong defences easily covered by a small group of men were desirable. With regard to the second, it would at first sight have seemed logical to place the hillfort squarely on top of the hill. There is, however, a steeper natural scarp on the southern and south-eastern sides of the enclosure as it now stands, and this may account, at least in part, for its siting. In any case, and particularly for a very small site such as this, hilltop siting is not necessarily the most advantageous from the point of view of visibility. In larger enclosures the ramparts are normally sited on the shoulder of the hill giving a clear view down the outer slopes. With a very small enclosure this is not possible, for if such an enclosure is set on the crown of a hill of any size it is surrounded by dead ground within a short distance of the ramparts. The alternative is to come down the slope of the hill and have good visibility in at least one direction. In an independent hillfort this would be a disadvantage, but not so in the case of a subsidiary site. The fact that here the northern slope of the hill was out of sight was not crucial. Any approach from the north-east would be clearly visible from the ramparts of the main hillfort, and the same is true of approach from the south-west. It was approach from the south, south-east and east which could not be seen from the main hillfort, and it was to give early warning of such approach that the subsidiary work was built. Because of this limited function it cannot be judged, as regards size and siting, by the same standards as ordinary hillforts. As in the case of Pontesbury the entrance faces towards the main enclosure.

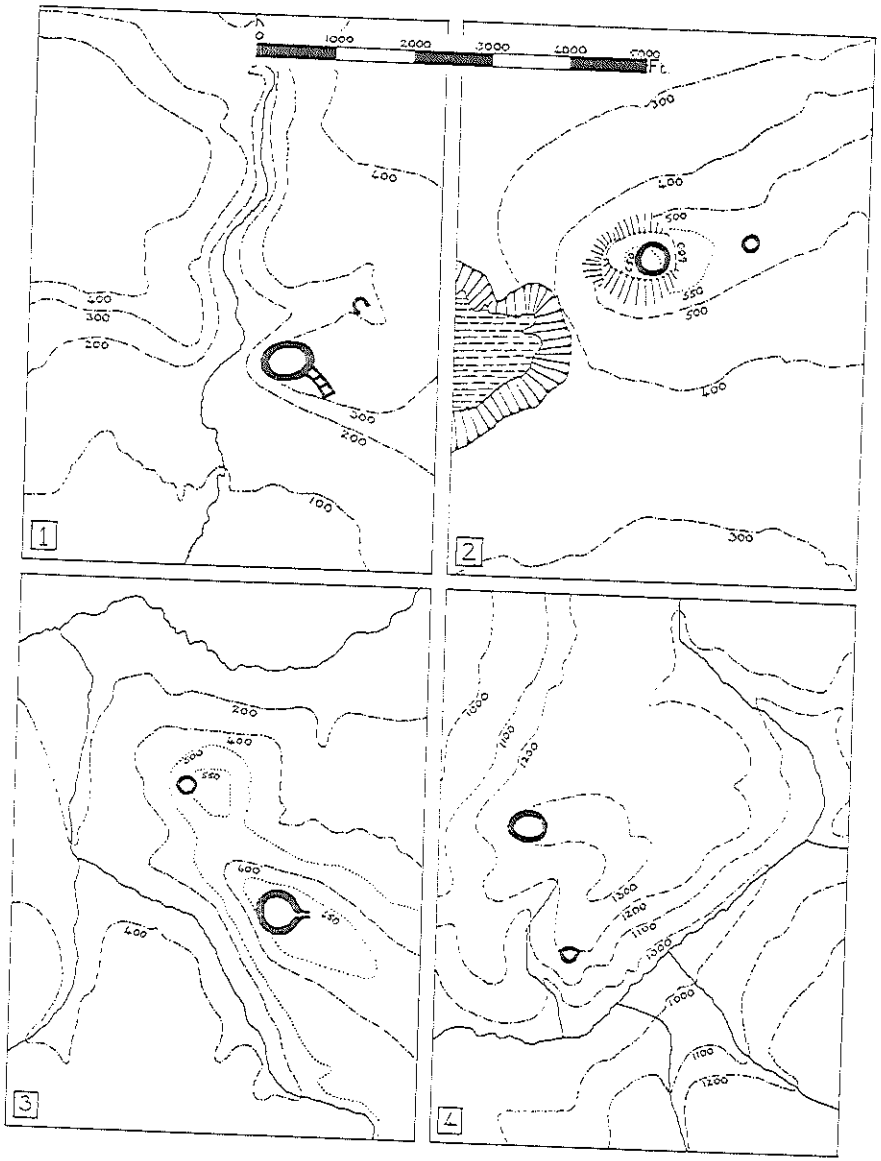


Fig. 4. 1. Llanmelin (Monmouth) 2. Gaer Fawr and Gaer Fach (Pembroke)
3. Bats Castle (Somerset) 4. Ratlinghope (Shropshire)
(*Based on O.S. Maps, Crown Copyright reserved*)



*Llanmelin* (Figs. 4 and 6)

The earthworks at Llanmelin[1] in Monmouthshire include a hillfort defended by multiple ramparts, a large, rectangular annexe adjacent to the main entrance and, 750 ft. to the north-east, what is described in the excavation report as an outpost. According to Nash-Williams[2] the outpost is contemporary with the first phase of the hillfort. There seems little doubt that here the outpost was an integral part of the original defensive scheme and was, in fact, a satellite hillfort, its existence making sense only if considered in relation to the principal enclosure. Allowing for the missing portion on the south-eastern side, the outpost in its original state was probably about 250 ft. long and 200 ft. wide, enclosing an area about 150 ft. by 100 ft. The defences consisted of a rampart of dump construction about 20 ft. wide and still 4 to 5 ft. high, on the inner edge of a roughly V-shaped rock-cut ditch about 20 ft. wide and 7 to 8 ft. deep. Around the northern half was a counterscarp bank 10 ft. wide and now about 2 ft. high.

This site is very similar in size and strength of defences to the subsidiary fort at the Breiddin. Like the latter also it does not appear to be in the best defensive position, but once again it must be appraised, for siting purposes, in relation to the principal hillfort. This stands on a westward facing promontory defined by the 200 and 300 ft. contours; the ground falls away steeply on the southern and western sides but the northern side is flanked by a coombe, rising from west to east from the Troggy valley. The subsidiary hillfort is situated near the head of this coombe, just below the 300 ft. contour. It is overlooked by higher ground to the south and east and, to a lesser extent, to the north, but it was clearly a westward-facing defensive point and these deficiencies were not important. The Troggy valley runs south into the coastal plain and it was from this direction that the greatest danger could be expected. The obvious route for any hostile approach is up this valley, and subsequently east up the coombe, and it was to guard against this danger that the outpost was placed at the head of the coombe, facing downhill towards the direction from which an enemy would approach. There is no sign of an entrance in the surviving portion so that presumably it was in the part now destroyed, on the uphill side, facing the hilltop and the principal hillfort.

*Carn Goch* (Figs. 5 and 6)

Carn Goch[3] is a large hillfort on the south side of the Tywi valley in Carmarthenshire. About 600 ft. to the west is a smaller enclosure occupying a small knoll which rises to a height of 689 ft. The main hillfort straddles the 700 ft. contour, rising above it at the western end, falling well below it at the eastern end. The two sites quite clearly form a single unit in the manner of those already described. The principal hillfort was defended by a stone-built rampart which was particularly massive at the western end where its remains

[1] Nash-Williams, V. E., 'An Early Iron Age Hillfort at Llanmelin, near Caerwent, Monmouthshire', *Arch. Camb.*, LXXXVIII (1933), 237–346. Grid Ref., ST (31)/461925.

[2] Nash-Williams, *op. cit.*, 290.

[3] R.C.A.M. (Wales & Mon.), *Carmarthenshire*, 142–145, Figs. 121 & 122. Grid Ref., SN (22)/691243.

form a mound, triangular in section, nearly 20 ft. high and about 80 ft. wide at the base. Outside the eastern extremity is a short length of bank and ditch strengthening the defences, somewhat similar to the additional features at the southern end of the annexe at Pontesbury. An additional rampart on the northern side runs from the western end of the northern rampart to the head of a rock scarp about 1,300 ft. away. This may be compared with a somewhat similar feature at Tre'r Ceiri[1] in Caernarvonshire.

To the west of the hillfort is the knoll already referred to. Its close proximity restricts visibility to the north-west, the direction of the Tywi valley and the direction from which danger could be anticipated. To leave this knoll unfortified would have been to court disaster for it would have enabled an enemy not only to approach unseen but also to assemble within easy striking distance of the hillfort. The satellite hillfort which provided the answer is about 600 ft. long and 400 ft. wide, rather larger than the subsidiary sites considered so far, but the size, was probably dictated by the size of the knoll. The subsidiary hillfort has two entrances. At the western end the ramparts overlap and run parallel, providing a narrow corridor about 150 ft. long, commanded from both sides, along which any would-be attacker would have to pass. The most curious feature, however, is the eastern entrance. This takes the form of two out-turned ramparts, forming a narrow passageway or corridor, running down for 200 ft. into the saddle between the two enclosures in the direction of the main hillfort. At first sight this might appear to be a means of providing the occupants of the outpost with a fortified roadway by which to retreat to the major site, but (a), there is no evidence that the passage ever continued up the opposite slope, and (b), even if it did, there is no access to the hillfort at this point. The nearest entrance is at the southern end of the great western rampart, some 400 ft. further south. It looks as if the purpose behind this entrance was the same as that behind the western entrance, that of forcing an enemy to run the gauntlet of a long, narrow, and in this case sloping, passageway if he wished to make his attack *via* the entrance.

In addition to the four sites described so far (Pontesbury itself, the Breiddin, Llanmelin and Carn Goch), a number of others appear to consist of a major and a satellite site and will be considered rather more briefly. The two sites at *Llanfillo*[2] (Brecknockshire) (Fig. 5 : 1) show some resemblance in siting to the Breiddin. The main hillfort is oval in shape, about 1,200 ft. from north to south and about 500 ft. from east to west. On the north, east and south are steep natural slopes below the ramparts. On the west, however, a platform, not much below the level of the hillfort (*cf.* the Breiddin), must have considerably restricted the view in this direction. On the platform are two knolls defined by the 1,000 ft. contour. The smaller of the two, the southern one, was the obvious choice for the satellite since it overlooks a coombe rising from south to north which was out of sight of the main enclosure and would have provided easy access for attackers. It is noticeable that the small enclosure is not on the

[1] *Arch. J.*, CXVII (1960), 12 & 13, Fig. 9, Pl. III.

[2] Grid Ref., SO (52)/114327; O.S. 1" Sheet No. 141.



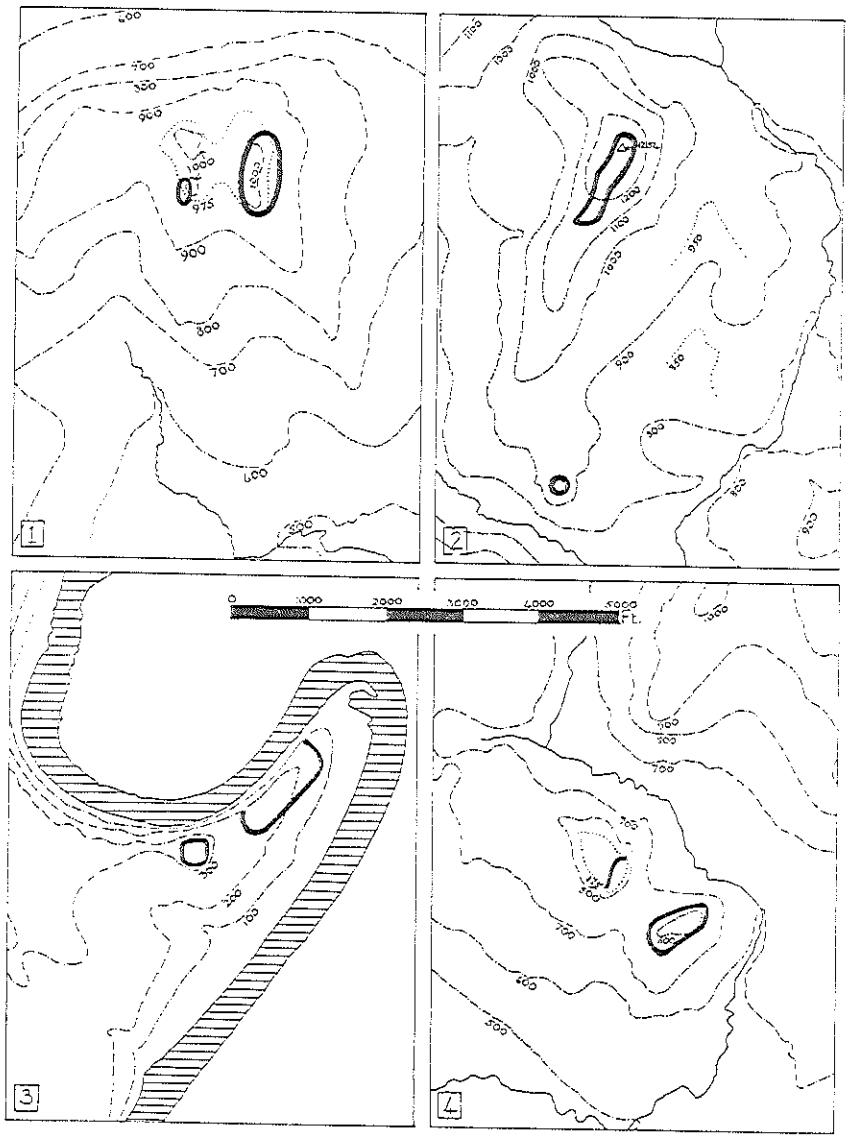


Fig. 5. 1. Llanfillo (Brecon) 2. Castle Bank (Radnor)
3. Piercefield Wood (Monmouth) 4. The Roveries (Shropshire)

crest of the knoll but on its southern slope (*cf.* the Breiddin again) presumably to give a better view down below. *Castle Bank*[1] (Radnorshire) and its satellite (Fig. 5 : 2) are somewhat further apart than those so far considered (2/5 of a mile), but this may be due simply to the terrain. The main hillfort (1,500 ft. by 250 ft.) occupies the crown and southern slope of a long narrow hill running north and south. The hill slopes gently to the south and ends in a promontory which drops steeply to Colwyn Brook. This promontory is occupied by the satellite camp which is roughly circular and about 200 ft. in diameter. Between the satellite and the main fort the eastern side of the hill is flanked by a coombe which rises from south to north, from Colwyn Brook to a point to the east of and just below the main hillfort, and would be the route from which danger could be expected. The satellite could give early warning of any hostile movement up the coombe, it would inhibit any attempt to scale the promontory and approach the main hillfort up the easily graded southern slope, and it would provide an excellent vantage point for a lookout down the valley to the east.

According to the Historical Monuments Commission's Inventory of Pembrokeshire,[2] the small site of *Gaer Fach* stands to the more important camp of *Gaer Fawr* (Fig. 4 : 2), about 1,000 ft. to the west, in the same relative position as the subsidiary camp of Carn Goch to the great Carmarthenshire earthwork. Gaer Fawr, which makes great use of natural features, stands on the end of a long hill defined by the 500 ft. contour. At its south-western end, above the coastal cliffs, the hill rises to over 650 ft. and this eminence is occupied by the main hillfort. On the north-eastern side from which approach was relatively easy there were at least three stone built ramparts, about 120 ft. apart. About 1,000 ft. to the east is a small knoll occupied by Gaer Fach; according to Edward Lhuyd the entrance to this site was on the western side 'and in a manner opposite to the ingress of the Gaer Vawr'.[3] This feature has been noted at a number of the subsidiary sites considered already.

As in the case of Carn Goch and The Roveries (*see below*), *Bats Castle* (Somerset)[4] and its satellite (Fig. 4 : 3) are separated by a saddle of land, defined in this case by the 500 ft. contour. The main hillfort occupies the highest part (above the 650 ft. contour) of an oval-shaped hill aligned approximately N.W.–S.E. Beyond the saddle to the north-west the ground rises again to form a small knoll, Gallox Hill, defined by the 550 ft. contour, which must have considerably restricted the view from the main hillfort in this direction. It is noticeable that once again the satellite is placed on the slope (in this case the western slope), of the hill and not on the crown. From this position it could perform a number of functions. It could provide a lookout position over the valley of the Avill to the north and its tributary to the west. It could inhibit any hostile approach up the otherwise hidden northern and north-western slopes. Finally, it could command the coombe which provides the easiest way up from the valley of the tributary to the saddle and which is partly hidden

[1] Grid Ref., SO (32)/087561; O.S. 1" Sheets Nos. 128 & 141.
[2] R.C.A.M. (Wales & Mon.), *Pembrokeshire* 187 & 188, Figs. 160 & 161; Grid Ref., SM (12)/896589.
[3] *Ibid.*, 188.
[4] V.C.H., *Somerset*, Vol. II (1911), 484–486; Burrow, E. J., *The Ancient Earthworks and Camps of Somerset* (1924), 84; Grid Ref., SS (21)/988421.



from the larger enclosure. The siting of the two hillforts meant that any attacker who reached the saddle would either have to divide, and thus weaken, his forces or else risk an attack in the rear from one whilst concentrating on the other. The two sites at *Ratlinghope* (Shropshire)[1] (Fig. 4 : 4) could likewise pose the problem of divided forces. They are situated on either side of, but well above, a tributary of Darnford Brook (the East Onny River), which runs north-south and provides an obvious route up to the hilltop. The main hillfort lies on the western edge of the relatively flat hilltop and because of its withdrawn position and the very steep slopes above the river on the south-eastern side the greater part of the river valley is out of sight; nor, because of the convexity of the slope, is the whole of the tributary valley in view. It was presumably to remedy this lack of visibility that the satellite was sited on the promontory defined by the tributary and Darnford Brook, about 1,250 ft. from and 100 ft. below the principal enclosure. From here it could easily command the tributary valley and enjoy an uninterrupted view over the main valley to the south and west from which directions danger could be anticipated.

In all the sites considered so far the satellite has been at a lower (although in some cases only slightly lower) level than the larger hillfort with which it was associated. There are, however, two sites where, for topographical reasons, the satellite occupies the higher position. The two associated sites in *Piercefield Wood* (Monmouthshire)[2] (Fig. 5 : 3) occupy a promontory pointing north-east, formed by a U-shaped bend in the River Wye. The subsidiary hillfort occupies a small knoll defined by the 300 ft. contour, about half a mile from the end of the promontory. The ground slopes steadily downwards in this direction and it is on this slope that the main hillfort (1,400 ft. by 400 ft.) is situated. The satellite is about 400 ft. south-west of the main hillfort and is, consequently, at a somewhat higher level. The knoll which it occupies must have considerably restricted the view to the south-west from which direction any approach to the larger enclosure could be expected. For this reason alone fortification at this point would have seemed necessary. An equally good reason can be found in the existence of a coombe, to the south-west of and hidden from the main hillfort, which rises from the south-eastern side of the promontory in a north-westerly direction. This would have provided would-be attackers with a hidden and easily graded route up to the top of the promontory to the area west of the knoll where, still out of sight, they could assemble for the final assault, downhill, against the south-western ramparts of the hillfort. From the satellite any movement up the coombe could be clearly seen and its existence would deny to an enemy the advantage of high ground.

The second site in this category is *The Roveries* (Shropshire).[3] The main hillfort (Fig. 5 : 4) is oval in shape (850 ft. by 500 ft.), with the ramparts situated in the region of the 800 ft. contour. Beyond the ramparts the ground slopes downwards in all directions, except the north-west, for 150 or 200 ft. To the north-west is a much slighter fall to a saddle at about 725 ft., beyond which

[1] V.C.H., *Shropshire*, Vol. I, 357, 376–7. Grid Ref., SO (32)/404978.
[2] Grid Ref., ST (31)/536959. O.S. 1" Sheets Nos. 155 & 156.
[3] V.C.H., *Shropshire*, Vol. I, 365–6; Grid Ref., SO (32)/525925.

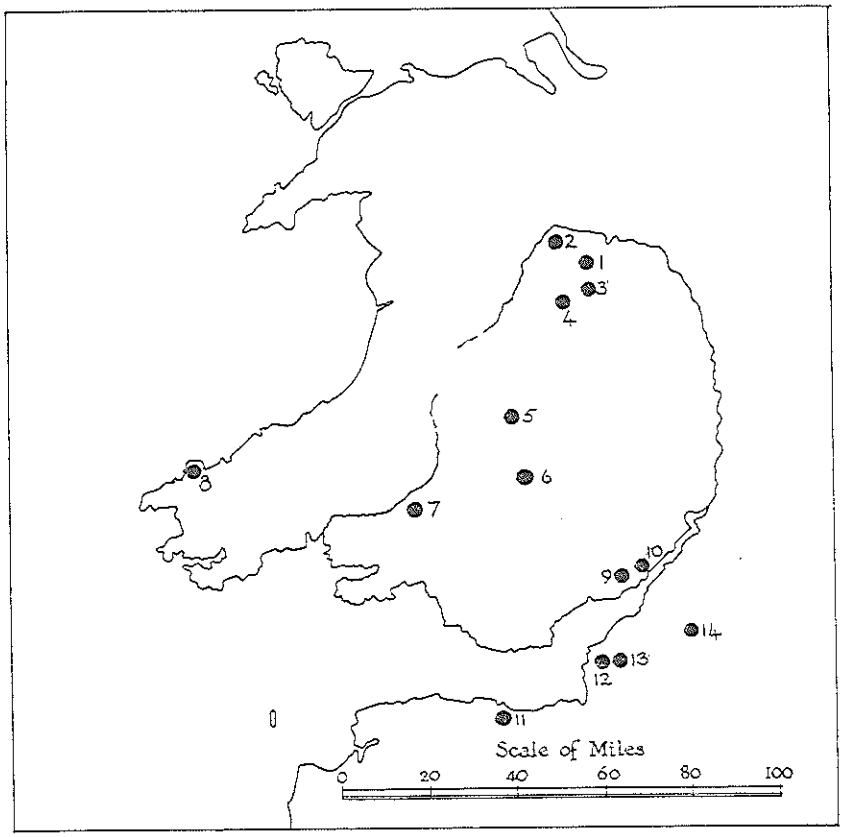


Fig. 6. Distribution Map of Sites referred to

1. Pontesbury
2. The Breiddin
3. Ratlinghope
4. The Roveries
5. Castle Bank
6. Llanfillo
7. Carn Goch
8. Garn Fawr
9. Llanmelin
10. Piercefield Wood
11. Bats Castle
12. Banwell Camp
13. Dolebury
14. Little Down Camp



the ground rises again to 850 ft., completely blocking the view in this direction. The highest part of this hill is occupied by the satellite hillfort which is about 450 ft. long and about 225 ft. wide. On its south-eastern side it takes advantage of natural cliffs but the north-western defences are man-made and very strong. They consist of a scarp about 20 ft. in vertical height, a ditch, a bank on the outer edge of the ditch falling 7 ft. (vertically) to an outer ditch 4 ft. deep below external ground level. The satellite and the main hillfort are about 500 ft. apart. The same factors seem to be operating here as at Piercefield Wood. Although not quite so vulnerable on its blind side (because of the saddle) it would nevertheless have been subject to concealed approach from the north-west and assembly out of sight of, but still dangerously close to, the main ramparts. This the satellite hillfort was designed to prevent.

This section can be concluded with the brief mention of three sites in Somerset which may belong to the group under consideration (Fig. 6 : nos. 12, 13 & 14). The large hillfort at *Dolebury*[1] is separated from the small site at Dinghurst by a distance of 1,000 ft. and the valley of a small stream (*cf.* the two sites at Ratlinghope above), but their relationship could well be that of a main and a satellite hillfort. The suggested satellite occupies a promontory which projects beyond the northern edge of the Mendips and would have formed an excellent lookout point. About three miles to the west of Dolebury is *Banwell Camp*[2] where the contours suggest that some sort of outpost would be at least desirable. The hill, and the hillfort, are roughly triangular on plan with sides facing approximately south, west and north-east. Below the ramparts the ground falls fairly steeply, except at the south-west corner; here is a long, narrow ridge only slightly lower than the hillfort, running west for 700 yds. This would enable attackers to gain elevation well out of reach of the ramparts and approach from only a slightly lower level. The top of the ridge is defined by the 225 ft. contour, while the ramparts are situated between the 250 ft. and the 275 ft. contours. Some sort of outwork on the ridge would have seemed an obvious precaution. There is, in fact, an enclosure on the end of the ridge but it does not appear, at least in its present form, to be a work of the type under consideration. It has straight sides with clear-cut angles at the corners. The longest of the four sides measures about 200 ft. and the whole thing is slightly irregular in shape. The surrounding earthwork consists of a low, broad bank with a slight ditch outside it. A large part of the interior is occupied by an earthwork in the form of a cross. The date and function of these works are unknown. The subsidiary feature at *Little Down*,[3] also appears to be straight sided and, in this case, oblong in shape. The main hillfort is situated on a westward facing promontory formed by the Avon and one of its tributaries. To the north-west and south-west the ground falls steeply, but on the east it rises above 700 ft. The ramparts are in the region of the 675 ft. contour. The outer feature is situated on this higher land to the east, about 1,000 ft. from the

[1] V.C.H., *Somerset*, Vol. II, 487–490; Allcroft, H., *Earthwork of England* (1908), 682–697; Burrow, *op. cit.*, 82; Grid Ref., ST (31)/450590.

[2] V.C.H., *Somerset*, Vol. II, 471; Burrow, *op. cit.*, 48-9; Grid Ref., ST (31)/410590.

[3] V.C.H., *Somerset*, Vol. II, 480–1; Burrow, *op. cit.*, 60; Grid Ref., ST (31)/709689.

main hillfort, in a position where some sort of outpost would have seemed to be called for. If this outer enclosure is, in fact, a satellite hillfort then it would appear to belong to the same category as The Roveries and Piercefield Wood in which the subsidiary feature is in the more elevated position.

This concludes the survey of all the hillforts with satellites known to the writer. There are probably other examples of the type awaiting discovery, particularly in Wales. Something must be said now on the question of distribution. With a maximum of fourteen sites any distribution pattern will inevitably be rather thin, but in spite of this it can be seen to be significant in two respects. In the first place, part of the pattern overlaps the area occupied by hillforts with widely spaced ramparts, and in the second, it overlaps, although to a lesser degree, the area covered by decorated curvilinear pottery (South-western Third B). Hillforts with widely spaced ramparts[1] occur in a number of the counties in which satellite hillforts are found: Somerset, Carmarthen, Brecon and Monmouth. Further north the two features are combined in single sites, at Pontesbury and The Breiddin. On this basis some sort of connection between the two types of hillforts seems not unlikely. In fact, satellite hillforts and widely spaced ramparts may be regarded as two different approaches to the same problem — that of providing defence in depth. In many of the examples described above it would not have been feasible to deal with the deficiencies of the site by means of additional, widely spaced, ramparts and some alternative arrangement would have seemed called for. The nature of the alternative is, in some cases, suggested by the topography, as at Carn Goch, for example, where the obvious way to bring the knoll into the defensive system was to fortify it as a separate unit. In other cases, however, the builders would appear to have simply drawn on their repertory of fortification techniques to provide the most suitable answer to a particular problem. This repertory would appear to have embraced three main methods: (a) widely spaced ramparts roughly concentric with the main enclosure; (b) fortified extensions to the main enclosure in the form of annexes, *e.g.* Pontesbury; (c) satellite hillforts. The survey mentioned above (p. 78) showed that hillforts with widely spaced ramparts occurred within the area covered by decorated pottery of the Glastonbury type[2] so that some connection between these two elements seemed certain. On these grounds alone some sort of relationship between Glastonbury ware and satellite hillforts seems at least a possibility. In addition to this the areas occupied by the two coincide to some extent. Both Glastonbury-type pottery and satellite hillforts occur in Somerset and Monmouth. The latter provides the most telling piece of evidence, however, since this type of ware actually occurs at Llanmelin,[3] one of the most clear-cut examples of a hillfort with a satellite. This quite unequivocally establishes a cultural connection between South-western Third B and hillforts with satellites. The nature of the relationship is, perforce, similar to that between South-western Third B and hillforts

[1] Frere, *op. cit.*, 51, Fig. 9.
[2] Frere, *op. cit.*, 52, Fig. 20.
[3] Nash-Williams, *op. cit.*, 291–307.



with widely spaced ramparts and may be summarised by the following quotation: 'It is apparent that styles of fort architecture and pottery are not dependent on each other, though both are elements that characterise a people and must be used in defining a culture.'[1]

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The series of earthworks at Pontesbury appear to represent successive attempts to strengthen the defences of the original hillfort. These structural phases are probably to be integrated with a sequence of events which embraces most or all of the hillforts of Shropshire and the surrounding regions. Many of these have been shown by excavation, or appear from their surface remains, to have more than one structural phase. Pontesbury belongs to the category of hillforts with widely spaced ramparts as well as to the more specialised group, distinguished in this paper, of sites with satellite hillforts. Quite apart from the connection at Pontesbury (and the Breiddin), the two groups appear to be linked on grounds of overall distribution and may simply be variants of the same basic theme. The partial identity of widely spaced ramparts with Glastonbury-type pottery has been established elsewhere. The Llanmelin evidence establishes a positive connection between South-western Third B and hillforts with satellites. The three elements (widely spaced ramparts, satellites and Glastonbury-type pottery) between them involve a distribution embracing both shores of the Bristol Channel and stretching up through the Welsh Marches to the coast of North Wales. It is not suggested that this is, or will ever prove to be, a single cultural province, but there are definite links between all three which need further elucidation. The excavation of a site such as Pontesbury which incorporates two of these features could be expected to go some way towards providing this clarification.

[1] Frere, *op. cit.*, 53.