

THE PARTED VEIL

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South Staffordshire -
the lost henges,
great circles and
astronomical alignments

THE PARTED VEIL

SOME ANCIENT EARTHWORKS OF SOUTH STAFFORDSHIRE, THEIR GEOMETRICAL RELATIONSHIPS AND ASTRONOMICAL ALIGNMENTS

CONTENTS

CHAPTER

PAGE

1. INTRODUCTION

Abstract; Background, discovery of the Great and Inner Circles

2 MATHEMATICAL ANALYSIS OF THE CIRCLES

3. THE DRUIDS – AN OVERVIEW

Classical sources

4. THE DRUIDS IN SOUTH STAFFORDSHIRE

*The Druids and the Romans; The Druids as found in local myth and legend;
The Celtic presence – etymological evidence*

5. SOUTH STAFFORDSHIRE – MAPS CONSULTED

1 inch OS 1834; 1:2,500 OS, 1880's; 1:25,000 current OS

6. ANCIENT EARTHWORKS OF SOUTH STAFFORDSHIRE

*Possible circle/henge contenders; Castle Ring; Lichfield; Knaves Castle;
Catts Hill; Shire Oak; Castle Old Fort; Barr Beacon; Conclusions*

7. FEATURES OF THE GREAT CIRCLE

*Place names with their etymological and historical significance;
Topographical remnants; Aerial photography; Site visits*

8. SUMMARY

General; The Velikovsky Question

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

- 1. Map of the County of Staffordshire prior to 1974 showing the study area**
- 2. Relative positions of the six sites**
- 3 Geometry of the great and Inner Circles**
- 4 Gould -Aldridge open fields**
- 5 Castle Ring – aerial photograph**
- 6. Castle Ring map, O.S., 1884, scale 1:2,500**
- 7. Lichfield Cathedral - photo**
- 8. Knaves Castle photograph**
- 9. Knaves Castle map, O.S., 1884, scale 1:2,500**
- 10 Cats hill map OS 1880**
- 11. Shire Oak map, O.S., 1884, scale 1:2,500**
- 12. Barr Beacon Photo**
- 13. Barr Beacon map, O.S., 1880, scale 1:2,500**
- 14. Barr Beacon Current OS**

1: INTRODUCTION

Abstract

This work comprises two fundamentally different- but associated -themes;

Firstly, is the contention that there existed in South Staffordshire a major geometrical configuration, connecting six ancient sites and being comprised of two concentric circles; the outer being one of 9.6 miles diameter and the inner one of 1.6 miles diameter. I speak as a Civil Engineer with 40 years experience - thus, this is the ‘what’ of the study.

The second theme relates to my efforts to discover the ‘who and why’, and encompasses theories, some of which may be controversial to the professional astronomer, historian and archaeologist.

I investigate in depth the history and archaeology of the six sites and suggest possible connections between some of the ancient sites and the Druids, and explore the many local legends associated with this cult.

I do not suggest that the Druids built the five sites on the N-S axis of the configuration (these are much older than the Druidical period), but conclude that they *did* found the Lichfield site and carried out their rituals at some or all of six sites. They would have routinely celebrated the advents of the Solstices, the equinoxes and May Day - the mid-winter sunrise was most important as the start of the new year.

The moon was a most significant body to the Druids and Professor Thom (Megalithic sites in Britain) identifies a number of events in the Moons cycle which were observed at stone circles; these include the Moon Minor Standstill (Az 62) Moon rising, mid-summer (Az156), Moon setting mid- summer (Az197) and Moon minor standstill (Az300)

Today, our lives are ruled by science, technology and logic; even Christian beliefs are in sharp decline in Britain; try to imagine however, life thousands of years ago when it was ruled by belief in the gods of the trees and lakes, and influenced by the stars. The reader may conclude that my findings are debatable - however in rejecting them he or she must nevertheless bring forward explanations as to the origins and purpose of the great configurations; the first theme still stands.

Background

‘The Parted Veil’ arises from my studies into ancient earthworks sites of south Staffordshire (some well- known, some obscure) looking for those which may formerly have been ancient earthworks, stone and wood circles/henges at one time and which may have generated astronomical alignments, for example like Stonehenge. The Local Historians Encyclopedia (1974) defines henges as “Late Neolithic and early Bronze Age circles of stone or wooden uprights, with a ditch and bank around them. Class I Henges have one entrance, Class II have two entrances facing each other” This would cover a period from about 6,000 BC to 2,000 BC. Clive Ruggles in his book ‘Astronomy in Prehistoric Britain and Ireland’ (1999) identifies “ ...the period from about 4250 to 1250 BC when the evidence has been interpreted as relating to astronomical practice is most extensive”. I decided that Iron Age constructions

should be included, as these may well have been built on much older sites. A word on dating. The usual definitions are that the Neolithic Age extended from 4,000 to circa 2,500 BC (although some sources have revised the latter date to c2,000 BC for Britain) the Bronze Age embraces the next period ie, up to c650/800 BC; finally comes the Iron Age usually defined as ending circa AD43.

The diagram below shows the County as it was in 1948, and thus prior to the major changes to the county boundaries of 1974, which saw the formation of the West Midlands County Council, incorporating Brownhills, Wolverhampton, Walsall and the Black Country. The study area is shown in a broken red line.



Illustration 1

Discovery of the Great and Inner Circles

I found, from inspections of the OS 1inch to 1 mile, 1834 edition, that five ancient sites – namely Castle Ring, Knaves Castle, Catshill (anciently known as Catts Hill), Shire Oak and

Barr Beacon lie in roughly a north-south straight line covering a distance of 9.6 miles - Catshill is exactly halfway between Castle Ring and Barr Beacon. Knaves Castle to Shire Oak scales 1.6 miles, with, once again, Catshill being halfway between these two sites. The figure formed by Castle Ring – Lichfield Cathedral – Barr Beacon is a right- angled triangle. The relative positions of the six sites are shown in Illustration 2. A detailed history of each of the six sites is given in Part 6 below



Illustration 2

I concluded that the overall configuration consists of two concentric circles; I have called these the “Inner circle” and the “Great Circle” and explore these further in Part 2 below.

2 MATHEMATICAL ANALYSIS OF THE CIRCLES

For brevity I will use CR (Castle Ring, KC (Knaves Castle), CH (Catshill), SO (Shire Oak), BB (Barr Beacon) and LC (Lichfield Cathedral

The Great Circle

Upon discovering the alignments of the six sites I then proceeded to plot these onto the current Ordnance Survey map, scale 1:25,000 (2.5 miles = 1 inch). It was necessary to cut and paste together no less than five portions of the standard maps thus giving an overall size of 118cm(length) x 85cm(width) – this size is necessary to provide coverage of all elements of the geometrical configuration.

I then carefully measured the distance from CR to BB (ie, the diameter of the Great Circle) using a long steel ruler, and found this to be exactly 629mm, ie 0.629m, using the high points of both sites as datums. At the scale factor of 25,000 this gives a figure of 15,725m. or 51,590.58ft. Professor Thom (Megalithic sites in Britain) discovered that the builders used a standard unit of measurement, the megalithic yard (m.y) which was equal to 2.72 feet. Using this conversion factor gives the diameter as 18,967.125 m.y. I suggest that the designers were aiming at 19000 m.y., ie, “the Metonic Cycle is a period of approximately 19 years, after which the phases of the moon recur at the same time of year.” [Wikipedia]. It should be noted that the Druids also measured time by the periodicity of the moon.

CR to LC was similarly calculated as 9,498.639, obviously 9,500 thus half the diameter. Therefore CR-LC-CH is an equilateral triangle and the subtended angle CR-BB-LC is 30 degrees.

The triangles therefore **are not** comprised of the classical right-angled versions described by Thom as being used in setting out ancient stone circles – 3:4:5, 7:24:25, 8:15:17 and less commonly 5:12:13, 20:21:29, and 12:35:37. The sine rule may have been used in design calculations; however this was not discovered until circa 100 to 170 AD, a period which we associate with the Druids. The cathedral site must have been set out using a form of theodolite to obtain the 60 and 30 degree angles.

The Inner Circle

The diameter of the Inner Circle scales about 109mm (0.109m) on the 1:25,000 OS map -this results in a diameter of 2,725m = 8,940 feet = 3,287m.y. this figure must be considered tentative given the map scales involved. I therefore sought to check this using the following calculation.

I had found that a tangent from the Inner Circle to a point on the Great Circle (in the diagram shown below I have used Barr Beacon) gives an angular displacement of 10 degrees – let us call this theta [θ], and the radius of the Inner Circle R. Thus using the sine rule, ie $\text{Sine } \theta = \text{opposite divided by the hypotenuse}$;

$\text{Sine } 10^\circ = R / 9,500$; therefore $R = \text{Sine } 10^\circ \times 9,500 = 1,649.2\text{m.y.}$ giving the **diameter** of the Inner Circle as 3,298.4m.y. Rounded up to 3,300m.y. this may be factored as 150x22 where the number 22 is from pi [π] = 22/7. This value for pi is attributed to the Greek

mathematician Archimedes (287 – 212 BC). There was considerable commerce between Britain and the Mediterranean in ancient times and thus it is fairly certain that the Druids possessed this knowledge.

The geometry of the Great and Inner Circles is given below and shows the relationships of the various sites, together with relevant dimensions.

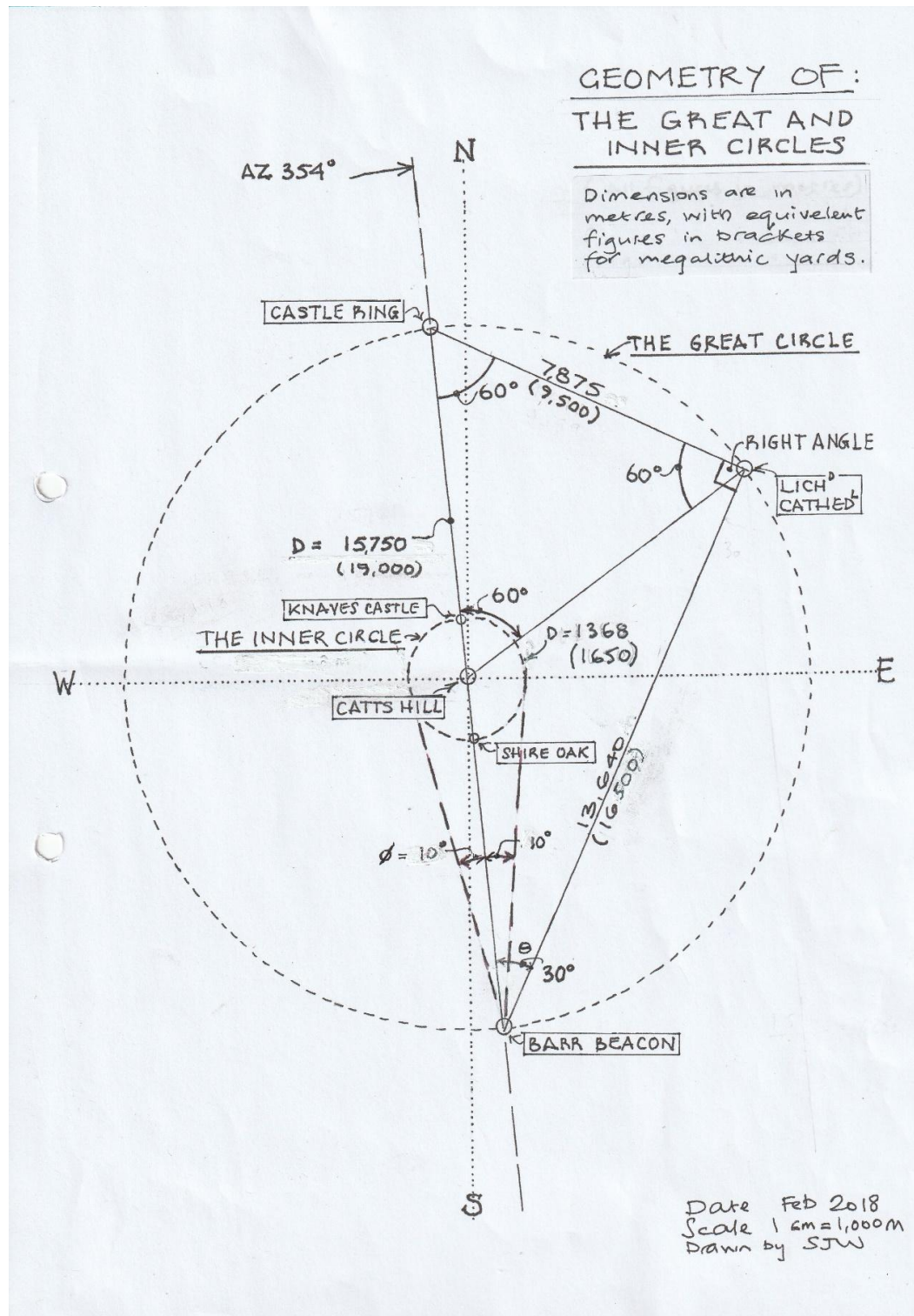


Illustration 3

Azimuth bearing

The azimuth bearing of the five sites is 354 degrees. What is the reason for this bearing? It may have been that the builders sought two sites 19,000 megalithic yards apart and simply happened upon Castle Ring and Barr Beacon; or it could be Deneb, the brightest star in the Milky Way.

Alternatively, it is possible that the polar axis had strayed due to astronomical perturbations.. This was recognised by ‘the ancients’ who built these features in order to study the phenomenon. [See Immanuel Velikovsky, reference his three books published in the 1950’s].

This subject is discussed further under the Summary section below..

The origins of the Great circle

I postulate that certain scholars, savants, engineers (whatever you wish to call them) carried out over a period of many decades, perhaps centuries (encompassing the Bronze and Iron Ages) an ongoing survey of the sun, moon, planets of the solar system and the stars. These savants were possibly located at Catshill -aka Catts Hill- at the centre of a henge where they had built an observatory and from where, every night, they scanned the heavens. They noted that the full moon changed the date of its appearance every month, and by monitoring this change continually, found that after 19 years, the moon re-started its original cycle - “the Celts knew the Metonic cycle thousands of years ago, as is evidenced by artifacts such as the Knowth Calendar Stone. It was almost certainly the basis for the 19-year so-called Celtic Great Year” (Wikipedia). It was after this discovery that the great Circle was constructed.

It (the Great Circle) may have been simply a boundary marking the extent of their territory, in which case I suggest that it could have consisted of an embankment with a ditch inside as per Avebury. However, the diameter of 19,000 m.y. is most significant.

In Part 7, ‘Features of the Great Circle’ I conclude that such a Circle had indeed physically existed in ancient times, as indicated today by meaningful place names and surviving indications of ground features such as bank and ditch.

3. THE DRUIDS – AN OVERVIEW

Classical sources

The Druids were the priesthood of the Celtic peoples, a discrete ethnic group which migrated from mainland Europe, ie Gaul (France) to the British Isles around the 6th Century BC – see John Mathews (The Druid Source Book, pub 1997). For the story of Druidism I went to the classical sources quoted by Mathews.

Julius Caesar (100-44BC) -“Nor do they deem it lawful to commit those things [verses] to writing..... They also dispute largely concerning the stars and their motion, the magnitude of the world and the nature of things, the force and power of the immortal gods, and instruct the youth in their principles”....“The whole nation of the Gauls is very much given to religious observances, and on that account, those who are afflicted with grievous diseases, and those who are engaged in battles or perils, either immolate men and sacrifices, or vow that they will immolate themselves, and they employ the Druids as ministers of these sacrifices; because they think that, if the life of man is not given for the life of man, the immortal gods

cannot be appeased; they have also instituted public sacrifices of the same kind, Some have images of immense size, the limbs of which, interwoven with twigs, they fill with living men, and the same set on fire, the men, surrounded by the flames, are put to death”

Diodorus Siculus (21BC) - “ They have philosophers and theologians who are held in much honour and are called Druids”.

Pomponius Mela (AD 18-75) - “these [Druids] profess to know the size and shape of the world, the movements of the heavens and of the stars...”.

Pliny (AD 23-79) - “....they choose groves formed of oaks for the sake of the tree alone, and they never perform any of their rites except in the presence of a branch of it; so that it seems probable that the priests themselves may derive their name from the Greek word for that tree”.

Lucan (AD 39-65 - “To you alone it is given to know the truth about the gods and deities of the sky..... The innermost groves of forests are your abodes”

Tacitus (AD c.55-c.115); According to Stuart Piggott ‘Tacitus writing of British Druids is describing the events of AD61, and implies that the religion was being stamped out at that time’. Tacitus, a Roman, describes the battle between the Roman Legions and the Celtic peoples of Anglesey, who are inspired by the Druids.

Amianus Marcellinus (AD c330-395) - “...the Druids, men of greater faith; they were uplifted by greater searchings into secret and sublime things, and with grand contempt for mortal lot they professed the immortality of the soul”.

4. THE DRUIDS IN SOUTH STAFFORDSHIRE

The Druids and the Romans

Following the invasion of 43 AD, the Roman legions proceeded to build Watling Street in stages from Londinium to the north -west, targeting the Druid led Celtic tribal areas. Wall was established circa AD 50 and Wroxeter circa AD 58. They had pressed on into Wales in AD48, but would not conquer the Welsh until AD78. The famous battle of Anglesey occurred in AD 61. We find in the histories of the places associated with Druidism that at Castle Ring “...a gold coin was found on the ring which the British Museum declared to be Greek and from the period of the Roman occupation”; at Barr Beacon (Cockin) - “a Roman Coin was found on the site”. Castle Ring and Barr Beacon were places in dense forests remote from Watling Street and I can only assume that the Roman presence at these places may have been the desire to destroy the Druidical activities, alternatively, the coins may have been lost by the indigenous Celts, having been traded for goods; however, as no dates are given, the suppression of the Druids in South Staffordshire could have continued until the end of the Roman occupation circa 450 AD.

Sheppard Frere [Britannia – A History of Roman Britain] suggests that the population of Britain may have been of the order of one million by the end of the first century AD, and that the native Celts were using chariots in warfare. “The main body of the peasantry seems to be have been poor and backward, but the treasures of Snettisham and other finds of rich decorated metal-work show that the aristocracy and priesthood were wealthy”... “not only was Anglesey rich in copper ores but it was also the granary of the Ordovices and the sustainer of their resistance; in addition, it was full of political refugees, and was also an important Druidical Centre (perhaps, even their headquarters). This priesthood had been forbidden in Gaul by Tiberius and Claudius because of its savage rites”.

The Druids as found in local myth and legend

There are powerful legends in the area relating to the Druids. A primary source is 'A History of Walsall' by Frederick Willmore (published 1887) where he suggests that the dwelling place of the Arch Druid was at Druid Heath at Aldridge...Barr Beacon was a favourite spot for their great sacrificial solemnities...and quotes Shaw saying that (here was) the summer seat of this High Priest - close by was a small piece of land, 80x25 yards, ie 88x28 megalithic yards; thus note the factors here 4x22 and 4x7; 22/7 being pi. The site encompassed by a treble ditch near to a pool. This was Bourne Pool adjacent to Chester Road at Streetly. Cox, writing in 1700 calls it Druidmere. "Close at hand was other mounds and entrenchments" – one of these is undoubtedly the 'Round Hill' an earthworks at Bourne Vale, 270 feet or 99m.y in diameter, and which I have seen myself. Dr Oliver maintained that Druidism was practised in many parts of South Staffordshire and particularly at Wolverhampton where the church now stands.

The Druids were however re-discovered in the 18th and 19th centuries and there is a great deal of romantic literature from this period, not necessarily reliable.

Staffordshire and particularly Cannock Chase in its original form as a great forest with its plethora of oak trees would have been particularly suited to the lifestyle of the Druids. I suggest that they were the heirs to the circle/henge builders and could have used such sites for ceremonial purposes, perhaps up to the exodus of the Romans, and the influx of the Saxons, circa 400/600 AD.

The Celtic presence – etymological evidence

Some evidence of Celtic place names is to be found in South Staffordshire. Mattias Jacobsson (Some Place-Names in the Immediate Area of the Staffordshire Hoard) identifies a number of place-names as being of Celtic/Welsh origin; Lichfield, Leomansley, Cannock and Walsall whilst Letocetum is proto-Celtic; also, "...the name-flora of Offlow hundred is heterogeneous, with a Celtic element remaining strong".

My own research suggests that both Brownhills and Aldridge provide peculiar fragmentary indications as to their ancient Celtic/Welsh past and thus possible Druidical occupation.

Brownhills: Whilst the Watling street is almost certainly prehistoric, Reece identified 'Old Brownhills' as being along Pelsall Lane and at Clayhanger. On Plots map of 1680 the place is called "Brownhill" suggesting the singular. Mining did not commence until early 1700's using bell pits, and William Yates map of 1775 mentioned coal pits. It is the traditional view of historians that the place took its name from the colour of early mining spoil heaps that littered the area (this proposition is nonsense, as the local mining spoil heaps were grey shale-I should know, as I was born and brought up in the mining village of Norton Canes). However, we have seen that the name precedes mining activity by some 40 or 50 years and we should therefore look for the derivation of the name elsewhere. I would suggest Bron Hill from the old Welsh, Bron meaning a round protuberance, a pap, a breast, thus a mound shaped like a female breast (Pughs Welsh Dictionary, published 1832). This obviously suggests a burial mound or Tumuli; if indeed there was such a feature, it will have long since

disappeared due to the depredations caused by mining in the Pelsall Lane/Clayhanger area. The Perambulation of the boundaries of Norton Canes dated 25th May 1775 also provides some illuminating names - Clayhanger is given as Cleangor and Claanger; thus from the Welsh, Claer, 'clear, bright. Shining' and Angor 'A bearing, or staying round; an anchor' thus a place of spiritual importance or a sacred site. 'Earthern Brig Well'; Brig is from the old Welsh, 'The top or summit' so presumably a well by, or on a raised earthen feature. 'Croga Well' may be from Crogwr, 'A hangman', or could be from the old Irish, meaning spirited, brave, bold, courageous, hardy strong or lively (well worship?) - the Druids were very active in Ireland, and there may have been contacts between the two places.

Aldridge: "In 1870-72 John Marius Wilson's 'Imperial Gazetteer of England and Wales' notes that...A height called Barr-Beacon is said to have been a place of Druidical sacrifices; and a pool, called Druid Mere, makes an occasional overflow, and has been popularly imagined to possess some supernatural quality"

This place appears as 'Alrewic' in Domesday (book) - "there, Aldridge is written as Alrewic - the Alder village- and as if confirmation were needed there is frequent mention of alder groves (alnetum) in medieval documents referring to Aldridge" Rather disappointingly however, he only gives one mention;..."William de Boweles has enclosed with ditch and hedge half an acre of alders in the fee of Nicholas de Alrewych . To be taken into the Kings hands. Fine 'alibi'. Fence to be thrown down" [James Gould, Men of Aldridge, 1957].

About half a mile to the north-west of the town centre is an area called Dumble Derry; on the 1834 one-inch map it was noted as Drumble Dairy, but by the 1898 edition it had changed to Dumble Derry in which form it has remained to the present day. The Local Historians Encyclopedia defines Dumble as "A north country and midland term for a wooded valley or a ravine containing a stream", but the area is quite flat! I discovered however that in South Staffordshire it had a different meaning as we find the 'moat' around Lichfield Cathedral described on John Snapes map of 1871, as a "Dumble or dry ditch". With regard to Derry, I concluded it was from the old Welsh, 'Deri' meaning "Female Oak tree; Drelin - Heart of Oak; Derlwyn - oak grove; Derw - The male oak, oak trees; Derwardd - of the nature of oak; Derwawl - consisting of oak, oaken; Derwen-an oak, Jerusalem oak; Derwin - oaken, made of oak; Dewlwyn - a grove of oaks or an oaken grove; Derwydd a Druid" (Pughes Dictionary). Taken altogether, we have 'a grove of oak trees, surrounded by a dry ditch', with possible Druidical associations.

'Anchor' crops up again and again - at Castle Ring, Catts Hill, Lichfield and Aldridge were Anchor Inns, all close to an ancient site, and I suggest that the name was handed down orally for perhaps a thousand years before it appeared in histories and gazetteers, perpetuating the legend of the hermit or anchorite guarding the sacred places and providing shelter for pilgrims. The Anchor Inn at Aldridge stood at the junction of Anchor Road and High Street; it is mentioned in the 1714 Court Roll [Gould] and in William Whites 1851 History and Gazetteer and Directory of Staffordshire. The axis of the five sites mentioned above passes directly through this crossroads.

There is also an Anchor Brook in the village, which flowed through Anchor Meadow from the pool at Pool Green; of this area Betty Cox says "It seems likely that this [Pool Green] was the original place of settlement in Aldridge. Alder trees, which is the meaning of the first part of the place name, like wet conditions and there was an actual pool here until it was drained by the cutting of the railways in the 1860's".

Walsall Wood Road was formerly Anchor Road, leading directly to Druids Heath, a short distance to the north. In Aldridge town itself is Noddy Park Road - in a document dated 1768

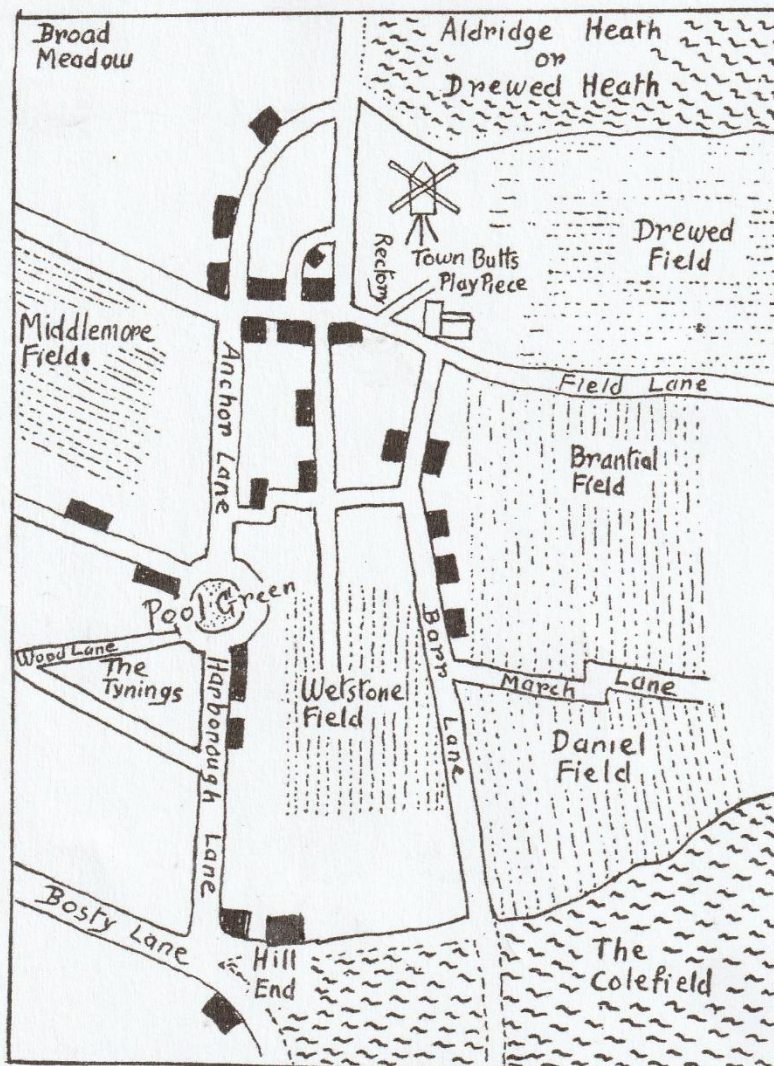
being the abstract of a title to land in Aldridge, appears 'Noddy Park Croft' formerly enclosed out of a certain common field called or known by the name Drewood Field or Church Field (Street Names of Aldridge, 1996). There was a Noddy Field to the south-west of Castle Ring. I suggest that the name is very ancient, being derived from the old Welsh 'Noddi' "To give refuge, to protect", surely a connection with the 'anchorite'?

Cockin notes that "an old post windmill may have stood on the mound 28 paces in diameter and seven feet high, Known as Gossy Knob, North of the Church and close to the rectory....Others have thought it a possible burial mound"

Hob as in Hobs Hole (north-east of the town centre) can be directly linked to puck, elf and sprite and may occasionally be associated with earthworks (Zaluckyj).

Immediately to the south of Aldridge was 'The Colefield', a vast area that embraced Barr Beacon and Sutton Coldfield. Cockin says "The Common has been called The Colefield from 1304...cold in Coldfield is said to be from either Celtic Coel or variants 'cold' 'cole' 'coal' referring to a magical place, an omen, a belief, or 'col' a sharp hill.

In his book, Jim Gould provides a map of the open field system circa 17th century (based on Terriers, ie contemporary land records) and we come to the very difficult question of 'Bran' as revealed in Brantial Field, surely a corrupted form of Brans Hall Field. There was also a Branton Hill which must translate as Brans Tun Hill or the hill which was the place of Bran. So who or what was Bran?



17th CENTURY ALDRIDGE SHOWING THE OPEN FIELDS.

Compiled from Terriers etc. The site of the windmill is doubtful. The roads named Field Lane, Barr Lane, March Lane, Wood Lane and Harborough Lane are now Little Aston Road, Erdington Road, Daniel Lane, Walsall Road and Birmingham Road respectively. Many cottages were of thatched limestone.

Illustration 4

This illustration is a facsimile from Goulds book

Pugh gives the following - "Bran s.f. - brain (bar) One that is over: the bird that hovers over, or the ominous bird: a crow: the bridge of a musical instrument". There were several famous men of the name of Bran; as *Bran ab Dyfynwal*, *Bran ab llyr*, and *Bran ab Llywarch*. It is also the appellation of many rivers, which might have been applied from their aptness to overflow their banks; or else figuratively, as the disclosing or ominous water. Or from the blackness of

the water; so that *Bran* in South Wales is called Colebrook in English. *Bran y lludw*, *bran ludlyd* or *bran y werddon* the roistern crow; *bran big goch*, a Cornish Chough; *bran dyddyn*, a rook. We also find Branaidd, *a.(bran)* like a crow or raven”.

Further research led me to ‘The White Goddess’ by Robert Graves (1961). *I should emphasise that nowhere in his work does Graves mention Aldridge*. He re-interpreted the ancient Welsh poems and in particular de-constructed the famous Cad Goddeu (Battle of the Trees). Graves says “...with a little patience, most of the lines that belong to the poem can be separated from the four or five poems with which they are mixed”. He suggested that the revised epic represented the calendar year, divided into thirteen [lunar] months, each month associated with a tree, a letter of the Ogham alphabet, a guardian animal and a Celtic God. He associated Bran with the alder tree, 18th March to 14th April. Brans name was guessed by Gwydion from the sprigs of Alder in his hand, because though ‘Bran’ and *Gwern* the word for alder used in the poem do not sound similar, Gwydion knew that Bran, which meant ‘Crow’ or ‘Raven’, also meant ‘alder’ - the Irish is *Fearn* with the *f* pronounced as *v* and that alder was a sacred tree”. Graves also refers to Bran as ‘the crow god’ and remarkably ‘Bran’ appears no less than 27 times; ‘alder’ appears 24 times.

What can we make of Pughes definitions and Graves’s analysis? Firstly is the emphasis on the ominous corvid family ie crow, chough, rook and raven – Bran is the ‘crow god’ so Aldridge was the place of the king/god Bran who can change himself into a corvid - note also Rookery Lane. Betty Fox says of Rookery Farm and Rookery Lane; “This road has probably been here since settlement began in this part of Aldridge, say close on a thousand years...Rookery Farm was a very old building..”

The alder, obviously, was sacred and indicated springtime, so perhaps the Equinox March 21st, and we also note the existence of March Lane on the 17th century open-field map - later Daniels Lane.

Just south of Pool Green is Birmingham Road formerly Harborough Lane - “A deed held in the Local History Centre (Acc, 683) describes a piece of land with Arburrow lane on the west...this is dated 1678” [Betty Fox]. In Pughes Dictionary we find *Ar* given as ploughed or arable land, also a prefix - “the force of *arch*, a chief; very; most; much” - certainly prehistoric, and the burial place of a great chief.

5. SOUTH STAFFORDSHIRE - MAPS CONSULTED

1inch OS 1834; 1:2,500 OS

A word on maps and mapping. By the very nature of my studies I needed to use maps that are both detailed and accurate - early maps of the region such as Yates (1775) are neither. It is not until the advent of the Ordnance Survey in 1791 that 'proper' maps start to be available; commencing in 1805, mapping of Great Britain was completed by 1873. The Second, or 'New' series was begun in 1840 and mapping has been continually updated ever since. I found the 1 inch to one mile series, published in 1834 to be invaluable - see sheets 34 and 42. For detailed studies of individual sites I used the 1:2500 editions of the 1880's. Place names are very important in this work, and it is relevant here to note that the Ordnance Survey went to great lengths to ensure historical accuracy. In 1805, for example, Superintendent Mudge noted, in relation to the Essex maps, that “To make the work as perfect as possible this survey was sent, as a mere outline, in quite an unfinished state, to different persons in the county, for the purposes of ascertaining whether or not the Spelling of Farms, Hamlets &c; was correct”. By 1850 a standard system had evolved and in 1887, it is noted that “the system of the Ordnance Survey is whilst giving due weight to the various authorities, to adopt the form of

the name which is well-established usage amongst educated people at the time of the survey” (A History of the Ordnance Survey by W A Seymore, pub 1980). In some ways, the plethora of detail on the old OS maps is an embarrassment when seeking to visualise the bare bones of the pre-historical landscape, a map of which would have shown hills and vales and watercourses, the whole covered in dense, mostly deciduous forest with very occasionally a small hamlet in a lea (open ground) whilst track-ways would have been scarce. It is necessary to mentally strip away the detail and to part the veil that hides the past from the present.

1:25,000 current O.S.

For very detailed measurements I used the current 1:25,000 OS maps. These analyses required the assembly of portions of map numbers 219, 220, 232, 242, 244 and 245 in order to make one large map sufficient to cover the study area. Generally however each site is as shown on the 1:2,500 O.S. maps of 1884

6. ANCIENT EARTHWORKS OF SOUTH STAFFORDSHIRE

The six sites

In the era under consideration, Middle England was thickly wooded. In pre-Roman times it was occupied by the Welsh speaking Brythonic tribes; the warlike Cornavii Ordovices, and Brigantes; it was a wild and desolate place. I suggest that this period saw the establishment of some notable ancient camps or sites in mid Staffordshire.

1. Castle Ring
2. Lichfield
3. Knaves Castle
4. Cats Hill (anciently “Catts Hill”)
5. Shire Oak
6. Castle Old Fort (I subsequently disregarded this site)
7. Barr Beacon

Thus there are six sites which I have considered and a description and history of each site is given below.

I postulate that anciently there may have been an earthworks or a stone/wooden circle at each site, but over time these may have become supplanted by (for example) earthworks, or a grove of oak trees, or else simply disappeared because of weather, erosion, looting or deliberate destruction. In some cases the sites have completely disappeared as a result of building development.

In the maps given below, I have indicated the axis of the 5 sites as a continuous red line, whilst the arcs of the great and inner circles are shown as dashed lines .

Castle Ring (elevation 801 ft)



Illustration 5

The map below shows that the axis of the five sites emanates from the Trig point on the North-West of the site - the Ordnance Survey usually placed such structures on the highest part of the site. I remember the old trig point very well – it was a tapering concrete plinth some three feet high. It has long since been removed.

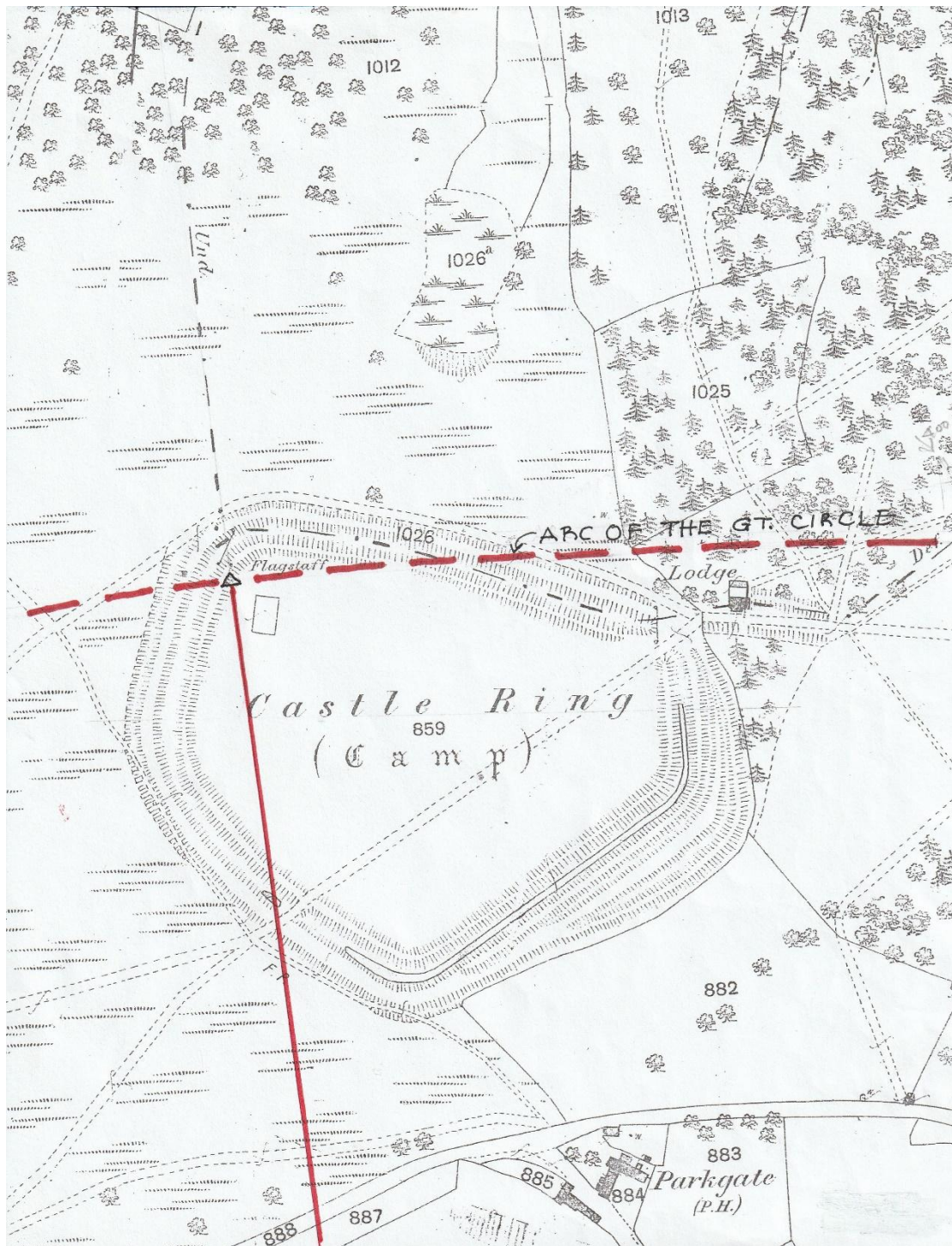


Illustration 6

This earthwork is an excellent surviving example of a hill fort. Some sources attribute it to the Iron Age. At an altitude of 801ft above sea level, it is believed to have been occupied by the Cornovii. It has multiple ditches, its (originally single) entrance is aligned to an azimuth of 55°; it is about 270 yards in diameter. Adjacent is the Park Gate Public House, formerly The Anchor, established in 1604 on the site of a farm or lodge. This illustration, taken from the Ordnance Survey map of 1884, shows the layout of the site

Gould, in his book "Men of Aldridge" (1983) writes of the Roman occupation of this site that it ...commanded the Old Chester Road, a primitive British way. Near Ogley Hay, at Knaves Castle, the old British track-way runs up to Castle Ring....". Nearby lies Beaudesert, seat of the Bishops of Lichfield from 1290, also Chestall, with its Roman sounding name.

Sherry Belcher in her book "Cannock Chase Past" says;

"Evidence of prehistoric people in the Cannock area is very limited. Perhaps the best was the discovery in 1910 of a Neolithic chipping floor at Court Banks Covert, less than half a mile from Castle Ring; the floor is a very rare example in South Staffordshire of a site where flint tools were produced. Flint pebbles are relatively rare and difficult to find in the (local) Bunter deposits and some of the flints may have been brought quite a distance by traders or itinerant craftsmen. In 1917 some fire damaged stones were found at Bose's well, a spring a few hundred yards south of Castle Ring."

The "fire damaged stones" occur during the Bronze Age; many such sites, usually in the form of "burnt mounds" are to be found in the Midlands and other parts of the country. I later discovered references to similar features at Sutton Park. In a history of nearby Colton Village (Colton History Society, 2006) we find that "...Bronze age burnt mounds have recently been found within the parish boundary and researched. It is thought that they are evidence of occupation by one of the tribes known to be in this area of Staffordshire in this period and who built a huge fortification at Castle Ring on Cannock Chase, some three miles away". The sites of the burnt mounds throughout the country show no signs of cooking – animal bones etc, and it is possible that the hot stones were plunged into water in a tent like structure to produce steam and with the use of certain herbs to produce a trance-like state. Of Colton itself, Cockin says "Erdeswick and others have have thought perhaps from Celtic 'col' meaning holy (SOS p52) here druids worshipped (LTM Oct 1971 p34). Or is from the forest-root 'coll'".

The Staffordshire Encyclopaedia is an invaluable compendium of local history. Author Tim Cockin derived his information from many sources and each of the following quotes should be considered on its own merits, as some are mutually contradictory;

"The fort is usually ascribed to the Iron Age, and more particularly C2 and C1 BC. A gold coin was found on the ring which the British Museum declared to be Greek and from the period of the Roman occupation....."

"In 1908 a flint scraper of unusual formation was found and thought to be coeval with the date of the Ring"

."In the summer of 1932, a flint instrument, ' a thumb-scraper' was found at Castle Ring....."

"Hackwood identifies Castle Ring as a Druidical Site....."

"The Ring was occupied until circa 50 AD; exactly why the site ceased to be used is not known....."

I would suggest that that the Ring was constructed in the Bronze Age, and that it was expanded and developed, being occupied for defensive purposes, circa the second or first centuries BC - surely the Roman invasion would be known throughout the country, particularly if the circle builders had a nationwide organisation, as speculated by Professor Thom? Around 50 AD the Romans came to Lichfield; it seems possible (but very unlikely) that Castle Ring was visited by the Romans around this date, but one gold coin is hardly evidence of a Roman occupation; more likely, it could have been obtained by an indigenous person, by barter.

Is it possible that it was a causewayed enclosure? Such a site is located at Mavesyn Ridware near Rugeley and is Neolithic with three ditches. Historic England in its treatise on such earthworks comments that “Certain Iron Age hillforts were superimposed upon causewayed enclosure, around 3,00 years after the causewayed enclosures were built...”.

I would also draw the readers attention to some features of the site; the line of the parish boundary to the north west follows exactly the alignment of the 5 sites.

Castle Ring was ideally suited for followers to view the Winter Solstice (the beginning of the New Year) and an alignment from the middle of the site with an azimuth bearing of 130 degrees passes exactly through Cold Well near Gentleshaw. I interpret this as ‘Coel’ Well, ie Coel meaning a magical place, omen, belief (see Tim Cockin, The Staffordshire Encyclopaedia)

Lichfield Cathedral (elevation 285 ft)

No map is provided of this site because the area around the cathedral was largely enclosed and built up by 1781 (see Snapes map of that date)



Illustration 7

This illustration provides a recent aerial view of the Cathedral and its environs. Stowe pool is shown upper left.

A few Mesolithic remains (c 10,000 BC) have been unearthed at Green Hill in St Michaels churchyard and evidence for Neolithic Settlers has been uncovered on the sandstone ridge that forms the base of the cathedral. A flint arrowhead was found in Beacon Park, but no

Bronze or Iron Age items have yet been found. Around 50 AD the 14th Legion of the Roman Army arrived and constructed a base at Wall, a few miles to the east.

In AD 601, Pope Gregory sent a letter to Abbot Mellitus who was about to join Augustine in England; he, the Pope, asks Mellitus to tell Augustine “what I have, upon mature deliberation of the affair of the English, determined upon, viz., that the temples of the idols in those nations ought not to be destroyed; but let the idols that are in them be destroyed; let holy water be made sprinkled in the said temples; let altars be erected, and relics placed. For if those temples are well built, it is requisite that they be converted from the worship of devils to the service of the true God; that the nation, seeing that their temples are not destroyed... may the more familiarly resort to the places too which they are accustomed”. Gregory then turns to festivals... “And because they have been used to slaughter many oxen in the sacrifices to devils, some solemnity must be exchanged for them on this account, as that on the day of the dedication, or the nativities of the holy martyr whose relics are there deposited, they may build themselves huts of the boughs of trees, about those churches that have been turned to that use from temples, and celebrate the solemnity with religious feasting, and no more offer beasts to the Devil, but kill cattle to the praise of God in their eating, and return thanks to the Giver of all things...” [Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English Nation, AD 731].

The Bishop of Mercia, Bishop Chad, arrived in Lichfield in 669; The first (probably timber) cathedral was built in 700. The Pitkin Guide refers to Saxon remains discovered in the 1990's and in the accompanying plan these are shown adjacent to the two eastern pillars of the central spire. History Magazine (online 2018) however states that “When restoration work was undertaken in the Cathedral in 2003, the remains of an early Saxon statue of what is believed to be the Archangel Gabriel were discovered. Historians believe this to be part of the coffin which contained the bones of St Chad...” It is the only cathedral in England with 3 spires; my mathematical calculations referred to elsewhere in this work show that the alignments from Castle Ring and Barr Beacon meet exactly on **The Crossing** (ie under the centre of the central spire) and form a precise 90 degree angle. I conclude that this was where an ancient pagan temple formerly existed, and the unique central spire reflects this fact. Another peculiarity about the present cathedral is that when it was built over the period circa 1200 to 1350 AD is that the centreline of the nave has an azimuth bearing of 61 degrees (relative to true North) thus May Day, when the Beltane fires were lit; Sir James Fraser [The Golden Bough, 1922] says that “..the Beltane fires were formerly kindled with great ceremony on the first of May, and the traces of human sacrifices at them were particularly clear and unequivocal...” He also quotes John Ramsay, laird of Ochertyre near Crieff, the patron of Burns and the friend of Sir Walter Scott.. “But the most considerable of the Druidical festivals is that of Beltane, or May-day which was lately observed in some parts of the Highlands with extraordinary ceremonies...Like the other public worship of the Druids, the Beltane feast seems to have been performed on hills or eminences”

The area around the Cathedral is known as Beacon Hill. Nearby St. Michael's church is reputed to be the burial place of 999 Christian martyrs massacred in AD 303.

Cannon G.M. Smallwood writes (Ecclesiastical Lichfield, 1981) – “Every year on Whit-Monday the Greenhill Bower is celebrated. The church (St. Michael's) is thought to be on the site of a pagan British Temple and the Bower ceremony is known to be of pre-Christian origin. The “Bower” is a hut decorated with leafy branches and erected close to the churchyard in which it was originally allowed to stand.”

St. Chad's well lies to the east on the same axis as the cathedral.

Chris Upton in his book “A History of Lichfield” (2001) mentions the veneration of St. Chads Well, “a popular tourist attraction by the 16 c, when the antiquarian John Leland visited it. Veneration of wells (a tradition of pagan origin) is common in Staffordshire and Derbyshire, but the established church whether Catholic or Anglican, has never been entirely comfortable with the idea”.

There was an Anchor Inn in Beacon Street, very near to the cathedral.

A short distance to the East is Hobshole Lane; a Hobshole Lane was also found at Aldridge with its association with Puck, elf, sprite and earthworks. An alignment passes directly along a considerable stretch of the Lichfield to Walsall main road, passing through Shire Oak.

Surely, the cathedral in its lofty elevated position, must have been erected upon the remains of some ancient pagan site.

Knaves Castle (elevation 500ft)



Illustration 8

Knaves Castle was a large circular earthworks mound, with 3 ditches, surmounted by a flat platform elevated some 25 to thirty feet above Watling Street.

The above illustration shows the site of Knaves Castle at a recent date. All traces of the ancient site have been swept away, but the topography is readily observed, particularly the steep rise in ground levels up to a small housing estate

Illustration 8 below taken from the Ordnance Survey map of 1884 clearly shows the site somewhat to the south of the Watling Street, comprising of a central mound, 33 feet in diameter within a circular bank of 131 feet diameter.

Reece in his book “Brownhills – a walk in History” (1996) says that “It is now the belief of many historians that the section of Watling Street that runs through Brownhills was in existence long before the Romans used it as their invasion route into North Wales. The Anglo Saxons called the road “the way of the Sons of Waetla, the same term that they used to describe the Milky Way constellation.”

The Watling street runs east- west in the vicinity of Knaves Castle, and about 1 mile to the West of the site is the Rising Sun Inn, which Reece notes was also referred to as “The sign of the star” on a colliery map circa 1800. These astronomical connotations are strongly suggestive of a pre-Roman era.

The Chasewater Wildlife Group in its publication “History of Chasewater and its setting” noted that it (Knave’s Castle “May have been a Neolithic burial mound or Roman guard post, situated at the junction of three ancient trading routes (Watling Street, Coventry Road and Ironstone Road.) It was never excavated prior to being levelled for building in 1902”. The Neolithic period, i.e. New Stone Age, extended from 9000 to 6000 BC

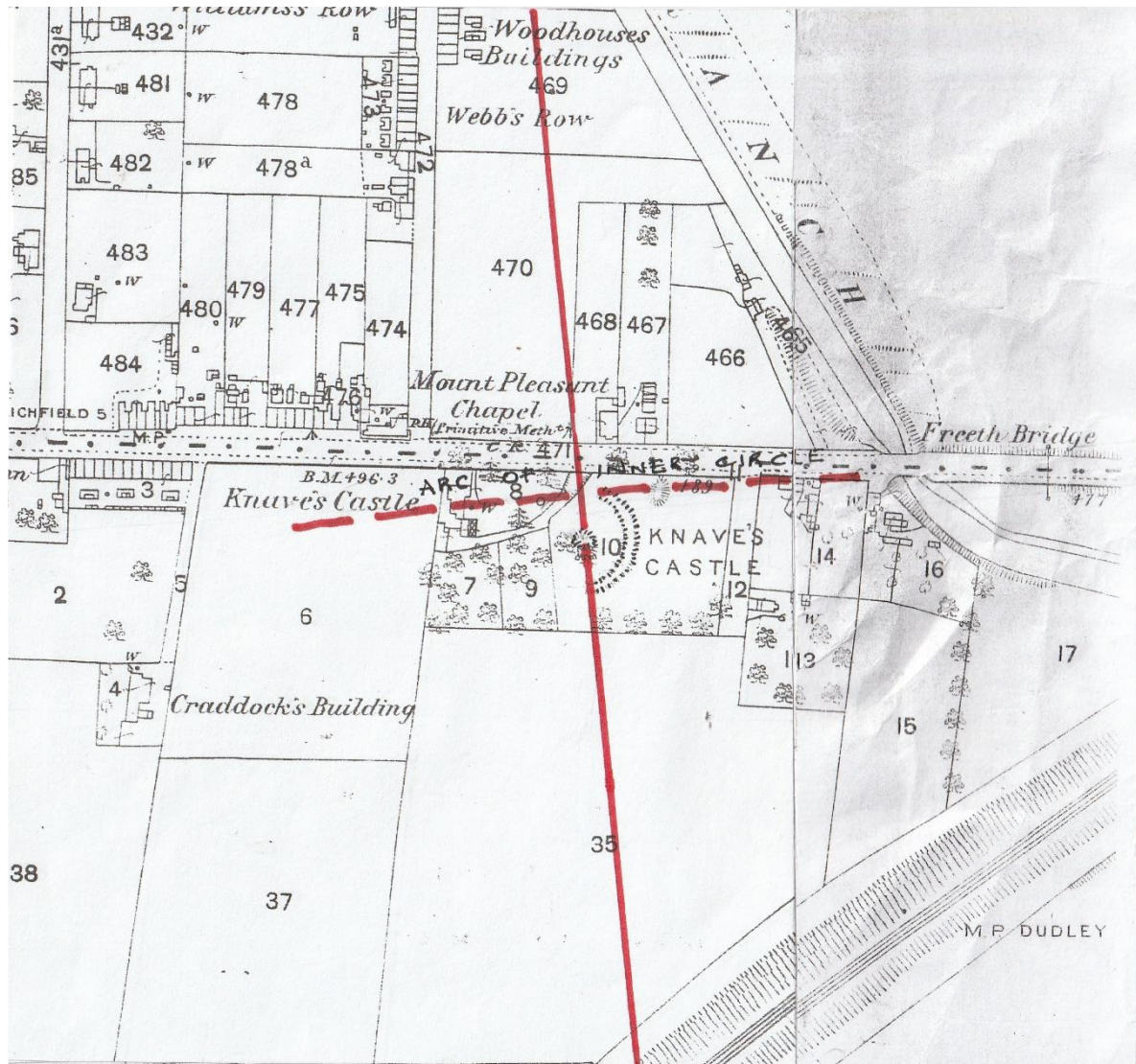


Illustration 9

Willmore (1887) says, “It is described as having been a small tumulus enclosed within 3 ditches and having an entrance on the South side and hollowed at the top. But all is now changed; mound and ditch have disappeared, leaving only a slight unevenness of the ground, while its bastions are formed by hayricks. It stood near to the Watling Street; and its origin and uses have been the subject of speculation. In the time of (historian) Plot the tradition still held, that the heath “was so infested with robbers that a watch was stationed here to guard strangers over it, which was repaid by a small gratuity. Others say that the robbers themselves harboured there and hence the appellation of “Knave’s Castle”. (Historian) Mr Duignan thinks it was an ancient tumulus and derives from Hnaef, a famous Danish Sea King. “Close by runs the old

British Trackway to the Castle Ring at Beaudesert”. (Willmore, History of Walsall 1887). I suggest another derivation of “nave”; the central block of a wheel from which the spokes radiate. From the Anglo-Saxon, “nafu”. Tim Cockin in his Staffs Encyclopaedia (2000) says, “It is believed to be of Bronze Age origin but has never been excavated” (Bronze Age cover the period 3000 to 1400 years BC). The site is now entirely built over and all traces have disappeared, other than the general profile of the original hill, or mound, (2003).

The Readers attention is particularly drawn to the work ‘The Knaves Castle Enigma’ by the present author and published in three parts in the Newsletters of the Staffordshire Archaeological and Historical Society, 2017/2018

Catshill aka Catts Hill (elevation about 500 ft)

This diagram from the 1880 OS map, shows that the area named as 'Catshill' is to the East of the Warreners Arms public house. The small ring indicates the centre of both the Inner and Outer Circles.

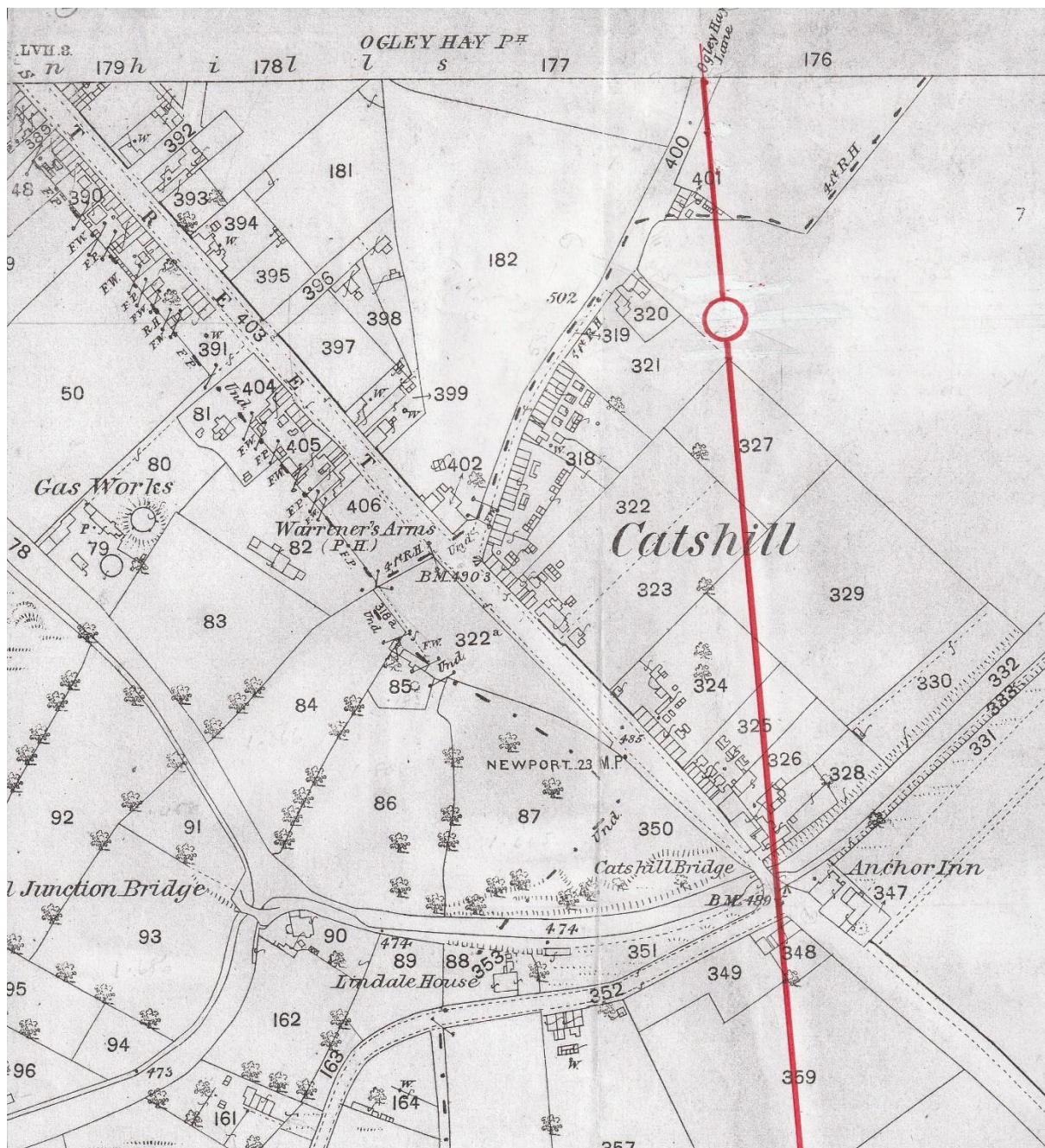


Illustration 10

“In the time of Plot the ancient barrows on the Ogley Hay called Catts Hill...were distinctly visible but nothing reliable is known of them. All traces of their presence are now swept away”...(Willmore, 1887)

“Cat” from the Welsh, also means bit, piece, fragment, or pipe - see Pugh, (1832) and Collins-Spurrell, (1997) dictionaries. Thus the area as existing in Wilmore’s day may have been a remnant of a former circle or henge. Pipe, I suggest refers to a musical instrument commonly made from the alder tree and I speculate that there was a stream here that was lost when the canal was built circa 1795. See also Aldridge for the alder tree.

Hackwood, (Staffordshire Customs Superstitions and Folklore, 1924) describes the site thus; “Catshill, the early form of which was Cutteslow, meaning the burial place of Cutha the great

warrior brother of Ceawlin, the founder of Wednesbury and conqueror of Mercia". On what authority, we do not know.

Goulds writes, (Men of Aldridge, 1983): "at Catshill by the Anchor Bridge were two more tumuli, but these were partly destroyed and the remains disfigured when the canal was cut there about 1795".

South of Catshill is the Anchor Public House - Gerald Reece writes that "There has been an Anchor Inn on the site for 200 years". I visited the site in January 2003 and noted the gentle linear eminence lying to the North of the canal and West of the High Street. This ties in remarkably well with the 1880 O.S. map which shows a sinuous embankment in this location and which could well have been the remnants of these ancient barrows following the cutting of the canal. The Staffordshire Encyclopaedia attributes the age of the site as Roman or Anglo Saxon.

From my studies of the OS 1:25,000 map, I estimated that the centre of the Great and Inner Circles was situated some 1170 feet (430 m.y.) north of the canal. I suggest that here was a local circular feature with *its* centre as the Great/Inner circles, .

Shire Oak (elevation 538 ft)

There can be no doubt that this great tree, standing on high ground was considered a very significant and important feature in the landscape.

The following O.S. map, scale 1:2,500 shows the line of the five sites passing through "The Shire Oak" as indicated by the small green circle.

The distance from this point to the arc of the Inner Circle (shown as a dashed line) scales as 5mm on the 1:25,000 map thus 410 feet or 150 megalithic yards. I interpret this to be a circle as indicated by the dotted red line

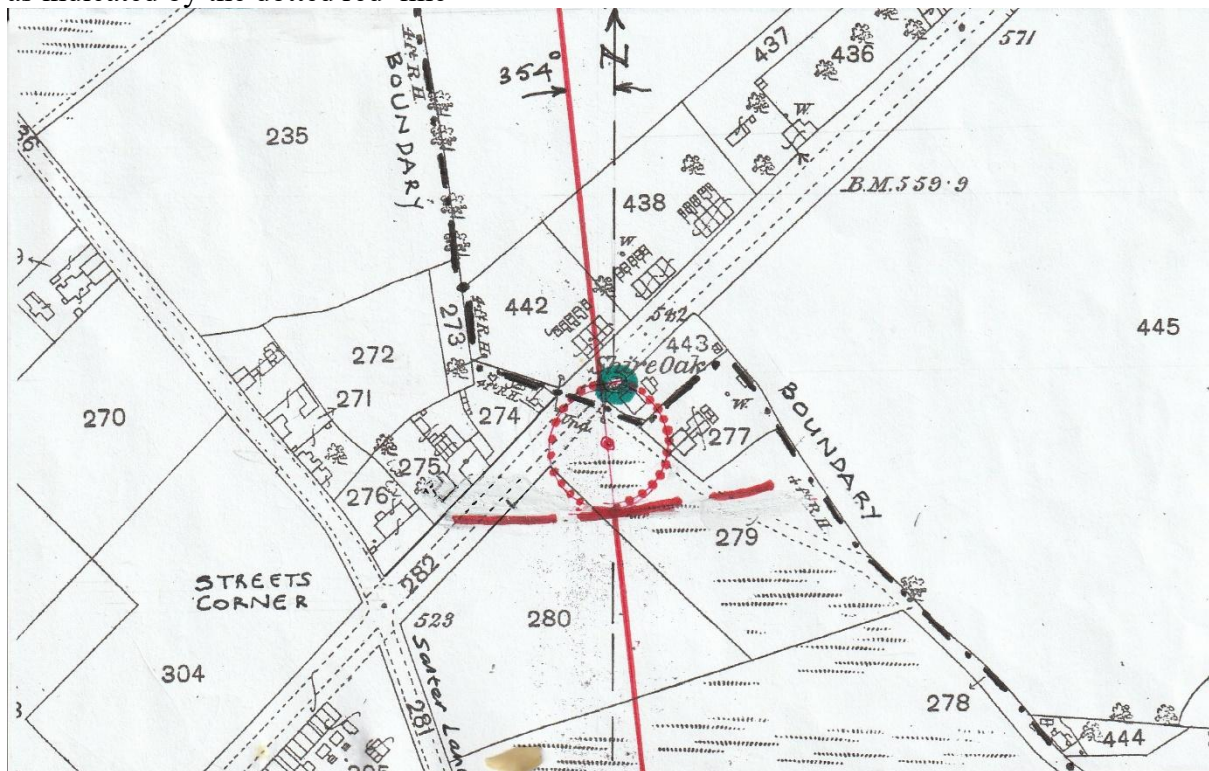


Illustration 11

Description from Cockin:-

“Former ancient oak which stood at approximately SK 053038 on S side of Lichfield-Walsall Road, a short distance from the summit of Shire Oak Hill (BHLT). Believed to be 2000 years old when the stump was removed in the 1890’s (CCC p64) (HOWW P15). Described as an old Druids Oak in WPP p111. It marked the boundaries of Shenstone and Walsall ancient parishes. The tree is mentioned as early as 1533 (WOPP pl p122) (BHLT) . It appears on Saxton’s map as ‘The Shire Okes’ (BLHT). In the civil war Prince Rupert may have used the oak as a rendezvous and possibly camped his army here in early 1644 (BLHT). There is a tradition that Dean Jonathan Swift (1667-1745) sheltered under it in a storm on a journey to or from Ireland. Under the tree Swift was joined by a tramp and his woman-friend. Their conversation revealed that they had only just made love together. This so scandalised Swift he married them immediately. The woman asked for a marriage certificate, where upon Swift wrote the following;

Beneath this oak in stormy weather
I joined this whore and rogue together
And none but He who made the thunder
Can put this whore and rogue asunder

(IADC p220. The wood in which it stood was a refuge for highwaymen and described as a ‘den of thieves’. Later references follow, but which it would be tedious to relate, except that a piece of the great oak was saved and now resides at Shire Oak Grammar School.

The full entry from Willmore, 1887, reads “Some relics are still left of the Shire or Scyre Oak, which was a very large and ancient tree, possibly 2,000 years old. It is mentioned in very early documents and marks the boundary between the parishes of Walsall and Shenstone”. Yates’ map of 1775 shows the place as the “Shire Oaks”. I believe that we can assume that a grove of oak trees existed here at some distant time in the past.

Barr Beacon (elevation 744 ft)

Barr is from the Anglo Saxon Beorh or burh; for moated mound, camp or castle. Barr Beacon at 744 feet above sea level, is interestingly close to the altitude of Castle Ring at 801 ft.

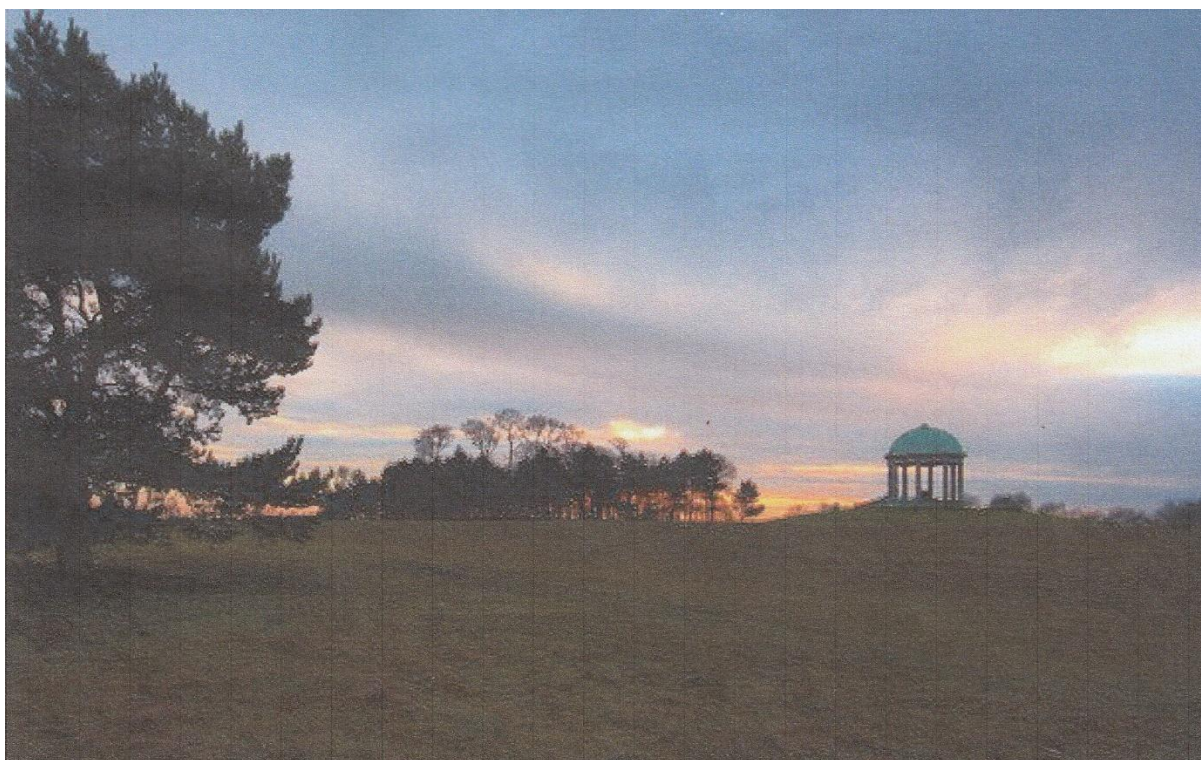
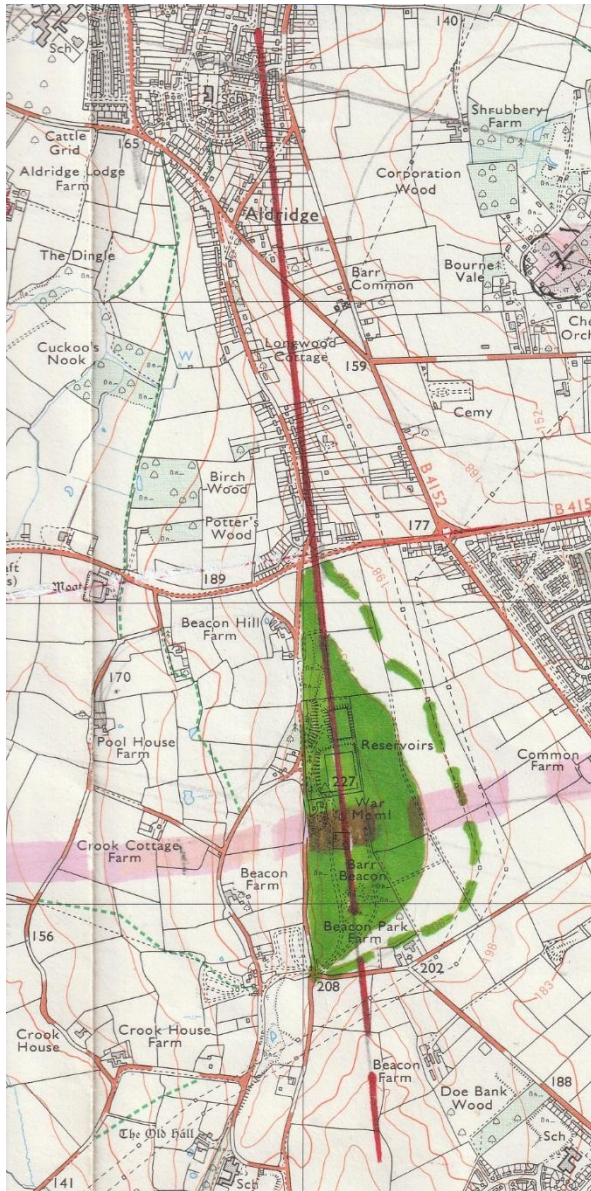


Illustration 11

The map (OS 1880) below shows a fairly featureless landscape and although not entirely evident, the land falls steeply to the west, ie to Beacon Road, but shelves gently to the East; the site is comprised of a long grassy mound oriented North-South - immediately to the West is a disused quarry, where sand, gravel and sandstone were formerly mined, whilst an erratic boulder could be found nearby. On visiting the site in January 2003 I noticed slight undulations which might have been remains of ancient berms and ditches around the southern extremity of the hill, suggesting an artificial construction in that area.

The boundary of the Great Circle is shown as the pinkish east-west line



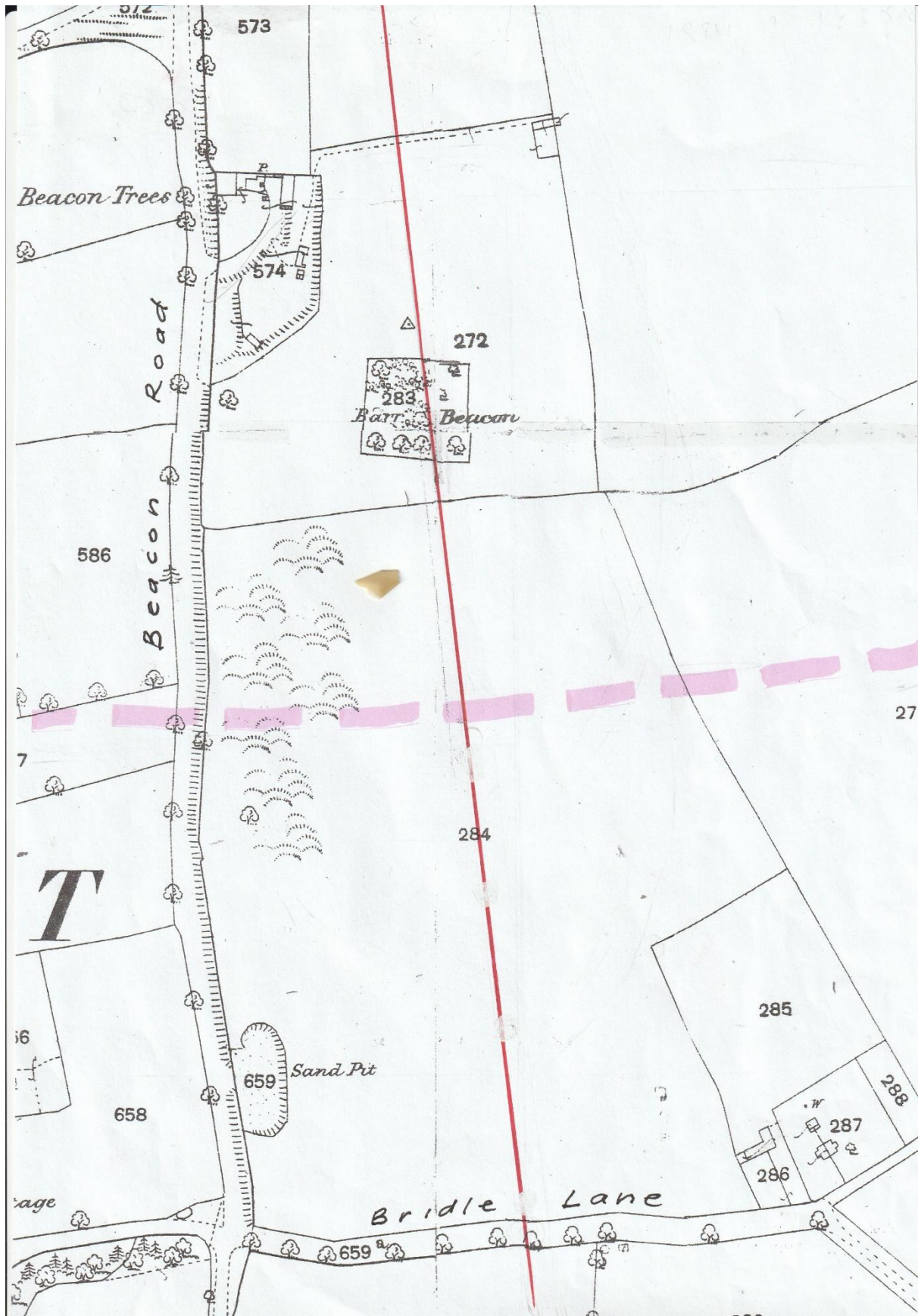


Illustration 12

This shows a plantation roughly 180 feet square and fenced in with iron railings, established circa 1799 by Joseph Scott MP; somewhat to the north of this plantation is a Trigonometrical Point.

In the same area (and clearly shown on the above photograph) is the Barr Beacon Memorial building, erected in 1933.

Artefacts found nearby in 1877 indicate that the site is Bronze Age (Birmingham Archaeology Society Transactions 1870). White's History Gazetteer and Directory of Staffordshire (1834) suggests that Barr Beacon may have been the site of the Archdruids seat in ancient British times.

Betty Fox (Street names of Aldridge, Rushall, Streetly and Pheasey, 1996) observes - "Whether the site was used in Elizabethan times as a warning beacon is not certain, but it was equipped for this purpose during the Napoleonic wars"

"The beacon itself bears marks of having been anciently fortified. Salmon, writing in the last century says, There are lines drawn around the hill (Barr Beacon) on one side enclosing a large camp in form of a half-moon. "Several stones have been taken from the Northern slope, one of which is stated to have been destroyed by gunpowder" (Willmore 1887). Cockin notes that a Roman coin was found on the site.

I also include below a map showing the site as it exists today. This is the Ordnance Survey Pathfinder Series, scale 1:25,000. I have indicated the probable area of the Great Barrb encampment in bright green. It was evidently fortified to the East with ditches and boulders, possibly to the extent indicated by the eastern green dashed line

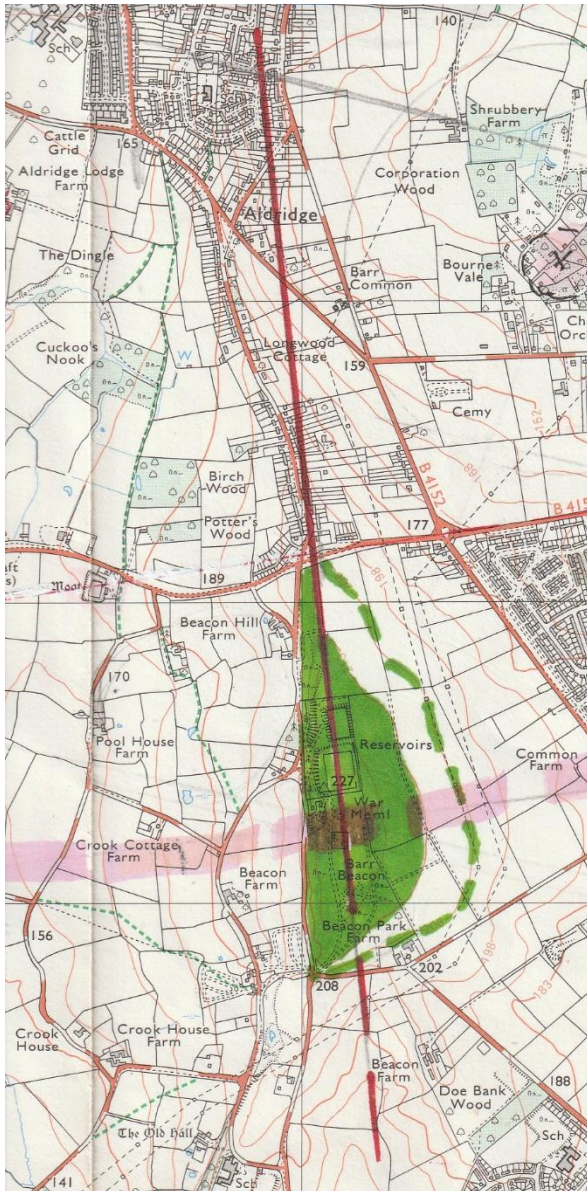


Illustration 13

Summarising, I suggest that Barr Beacon was anciently fortified; to the west the land falls very sharply and is easily defended, thus an attack from that side would be unlikely to succeed. Conversely, to the east the land falls away quite gently thus providing a more feasible attack route – therefore this aspect was protected by ditches and boulders. I conclude that whilst the site may have been used for ceremonial purposes (celebrating the Mid-winter solstice etc) it was also used as a refuge in times of conflict.

7. FEATURES OF THE GREAT CIRCLE

Place names with their etymological and historical significance

I suspect that the circumference of 'The great Circle', which extended to nearly 31 miles, may have consisted of an inner broad ditch adjacent to an outer embankment, like Avebury. I am inclined therefore to include those features, which come within, say ¼ mile of the line of the Great Circle. Relevant features are listed below in clockwise order from the North, giving their etymological and historical significance, and have been identified from the 1892 1 inch series, unless otherwise indicated. *Historical information is from 'The Staffordshire Encyclopedia' by Tim Cockin, unless otherwise stated.*

Castle Ring - ancient earthworks

Cross Ash - Crossroads. Appears as a hamlet circa 1850

Gortons Green - Possibly from Gor; Celtic, meaning extreme, high above, very.

Appears as Gamton Green on Yates' map

Stoneywell Lane - Old hollow lane

Bilston Brook, Bilston farm, 1898 OS - From Bils or Bael – Beltane 6 th May

Lee Grange-From Lea, enclosure. (external). Lee (Lea) Grange was the centre of the Stychbrook estate

Gaia Lane, Lichfield .From the Greek "Earth"; Greek goddess of the earth. Ascribed to "Jay" (latin) or "cae", Welsh for enclosure

Lichfield Cathedral - founded circa 7th century, probably on a pagan site or temple.

Colestubbe Street & Gate , Lichfield – see also Coel

Borrow Cop Hill (Barrow Cop on old lynch map) - Ancient burial place just off-line

Freeford and Freeford Farm- From "Friga" – Earth Mother, goddess worshipped by the Angli, 1st Century (Ref: Zaluckyj)

Bury Hill, also Berry Hill Farm- ancient burial place? Internal to line 1/8 mile

Icknild Street – Roman or pre – Roman road.

Offlow - Ancient earthworks; Internal, ¼ mile, possible burial place of King Offa

Weeford - From Weoh; Ford by a heathen temple (located on the Black Brook) Ref: Zaluckyj

Streetway House - Located on ancient Watling Street. ¼ mile internal.

Weeford Gate - On ancient Watling street, was this a gateway through the great Circle?

The Blackbrook - Black from Blake, blac, shining, white, pale. blessed, light given.

Watford Gap -¼ mile within circle alignment. Another Gateway? "Wada's ford, or the Hunting lodge by the gap"

Blake Street – see Black et al

Milking Gate- Another gateway through the Great Circle?

"Gould notes that there are six burnt mounds in Sutton Park at Milking Gate" .

Streetly Hill, Sutton Park - Significantly, the alignment of the Great Circle passes through Streetly Hill in Sutton Park and crosses ancient Icknield Street. The arc enters the park through a gateway on the northern boundary. It crosses Icknield Street at a point where the road is bisected by the old County Boundary (Yates 1775). This boundary had changed by 1898. Prehistoric timber trackways uncovered in 18th century

Great Barr Common- The alignment passes across the common, going precisely through cross-roads of Chester road and Bridle Lane. Great Barr Common is a remnant of Sutton Chase, also called the Colefield (see Coel)

Barr Beacon - Ancient Earthworks.

The Skip - Perhaps from “Skip”- Swaying rapidly from one foot to another. See also dod, dodge; as in land surveying, using ranging rods to sight through an alignment.

Ginity Groves - Gin, an instrument of torture; to begin.

The Lions Den - A curious name, but there is no mention of this place in Willmores History of Walsall. Cockin refers to “a very old cottage...the name is from the estate on which (it) stood”

Spring Hill (just East of Walsall). Spring equinox

Gorway House, Gorway Farm -See also Gortons Green above, which is on exactly the opposite side of the Great Circle from Walsall. From Gor-Celtic, meaning extreme, high, above, very. Or from the Gorway family, 16C (Cockin). Gorway House & Gorway Farm are about ¼ mile external to the Great Circle.

Walsall- also spelt Wallsall (Yates map 1775) Willmore concluded that the name was from “the Hall of the Welsh”, i.e. the Celts. Alternatively it could mean the Hall of the Wall. A sheltered place by/at the palisade. The town is on a plateau bestriding the Great Circle, and the southern part of this plateau is called Colmore, see also Coel above. Roman coins found here, Agrippa (63-12 BC) and Commodus (186-9BC) Does not appear in Domesday Book.

Bolds Hill-From Bils, Bael, Beltane 6th May; ancient Babylonian Sun God, 6 May

Pouk Hill – see also Puck, Puca – Zaluckij; “the stream of the goblin or watersprite”.

“Puck and Hob names may occasionally be associated with earth-works”.

Bentley, Bentley Farm, Bentley Hall, Bentley Lodge Bentley Coppice

(A.S.) “ To bring into a curved shape (as a bow)”

Sneyd pool, Sneyd Farm Sneyd Brook-Possibly from Snead – “The long curved handle of a scythe” (N.E.D.). See also the Sneyd Roll, 1377, (Willmore), but is the name from the family, or the family name from the place?.

“Snaed” (AS), clearing, woodland

Spring Hill - Spring Equinox.

Holly Bank - Sometimes a corruption of Holy. The circle passes through a crossroads at Holly Bank. *Warstone* - Horstone, Harestone (Yates 1775). Har-ston (AS), boundary stone

lacklees Farm - Black; See Blac etc. above. Lees from Lea. On the opposite side of the Great Circle (i.e. on a line drawn through the centre at Catshill) is Blackbrook and Blackbrook Farm.

Wyrley Bank - Wyrley – The open place where the wild myrtle grows. Earliest mention, a plague in 1665.

Cheslyn Hay- The place was certainly one of the “Hayes” of the kings Chase. Professor Carl Chinn noted that Cheslyn is from the Anglo Saxon “cist” and “hlinc” signifying a coffin ledge or terrace, perhaps referring to a place where a coffin or a chest has been found.

Longhouse (Watling Street)- Of the street, or the Great Circle? unknown.

Hawks Green -Hawk; from Hafoe, A.S.; to seize.

Hemlocks Farm-The plural suggest a family name, but Hemlock was also a herb used by the Druids.

Rawnsley-From the Rawnpike Oak, or means the “woodland glade of the raven”

Tographical remnants

This study was undertaken on the modern 1: 25000 Ordnance Survey, which has contour lines plotted at 5m/50ft intervals; as noted above, I had already drawn the Great circle on this Map. I carefully inspected these contour lines where they cross or run close to the Great Circle. I found that 50 % of all contour lines lying across or near to the Great Circle were suggestive of a slight depression on the inside and which might have been a former ditch. Aubrey (“Prehistoric Avebury, “1979) has remarked that the ditch is on the inside of the ring rather than the outside, and therefore was not a defensive measure.

Aerial Photography

This study was carried out using the “Get mapping” Aerial photography on P.C. CD-ROM, and Windows XP. I inspected the photography with a view to locating traces of the Great Circle as faint lines such as crop markings which would indicate former embankments and ditches. The landscape geography of the Great Circle can be split roughly into two halves, East and west. To the East the Landscape is almost entirely agricultural, pasture and arable with woodland and copses; to the West it is mostly built up, with much of the remaining open area having been open cast mined for coal. Whilst the East Side offered the greatest opportunity for study, I was unable to find any robust or conclusive evidence.

Site visits

I made a number of site visits particularly to the eastern side which is largely open countryside, but did not investigate the western side, which is built up, and where mining and open-casting has taken place.

8 SUMMARY

General

The descriptions and calculations given above do, I strongly suggest that, there existed in South Staffordshire in ancient times two major circular configurations with diameters of 9.6 miles and 1.6 miles. I have sought to show that in modern times that there are fragmentary remnants of these..

The five in-line sites were of the Bronze Age Period (2000-800BC). These were not established by the Druids, but by some earlier sect who had departed long before the arrival of the Druids

Lichfield must have been located using the sine rule (discovered 100-170 AD) and pi (discovered 287-212 BC). Thus it was established in the Druidic period

It seems probable that some, or possibly all, of the six sites were used to view the Solstices, Equinoxes, May-day and phases of the moon, and I have given Castle Ring and Lichfield Cathedral as plausible examples.

The Velikovsky Question

Immanuel Velikovsky wrote three books in the 1950's – 'Worlds in Collision', 'Earth in Upheaval' and 'Ages in Chaos'. Following many years of research he concluded that the Earth had suffered two cataclysmic changes in the past due to the close passage of other planetary bodies. The first was circa 1500 BC, and the second circa 800 BC. The Earth slowed down and its axis tilted; it gradually recovered, to the state that we know today.

I suggest that in the first instance the forebears of the Druids established the five 'in-line' sites with its azimuth of 354 degrees and Great Circle diameter of 19,000 megalithic yards.

In the second instance the Druids established the Lichfield site with an azimuth of about 359 degrees.

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