

Tintern Parva

The Hillside above Parva Vineyard

Prepared by Adrian Wood, The Nurtons, Tintern August 2016

In early August 2016 members of the History Group were taken around Parva Vineyard and the hillside grazing pastures by Colin and Judith. They showed us some of the features they have become aware of over the two decades of their ownership and management. Many of these features are not on OS maps and may represent aspects of the history of this part of the village largely missing from the records. Our thanks are therefore due to Judith and Colin for their help, guidance and advice.

Using the 1881 OS map as the base we have added those features we were shown, and located with Dave Tuffrey's GPS. Other structures have also been added based on observations and records from the hillside and parts of Coed Beddick. Most of these are shown in colour and numbered, the numbers with brief descriptions below. It should be stated that most of the locations may have an error in positioning of up to 4 or 5 meters, hopefully no more, and the comments, dates and interpretations are often only opinions which may be justifiably amended.

What have we learned?

Looking at our updated map, 'The Hillside Above Tintern Parva' (see the next page) what is clear is the extra information; mostly relating to stone structures visible at the surface or sub-surface and have become known through years of managing the land. These include low or buried walls, 'foundations', culverts, probable tracks, field systems and ephemeral springs.

An example or two:

The walls of the field system to the NW of the vineyard with its access track are not now easy to locate on the ground, although the bases of three rectangular buildings can be found; Nos 2,2a,2b. By contrast Colin and Judith have brought the main hillside back into productive pastures through bracken control and creating new field boundaries, in the process of which springs have been cleaned up, culverts located and other possible buildings uncovered; Nos 1,7,22. There is also an intriguing trackway evident just over their NW boundary on the edge of Roger and Liz Wood's land. But why there?

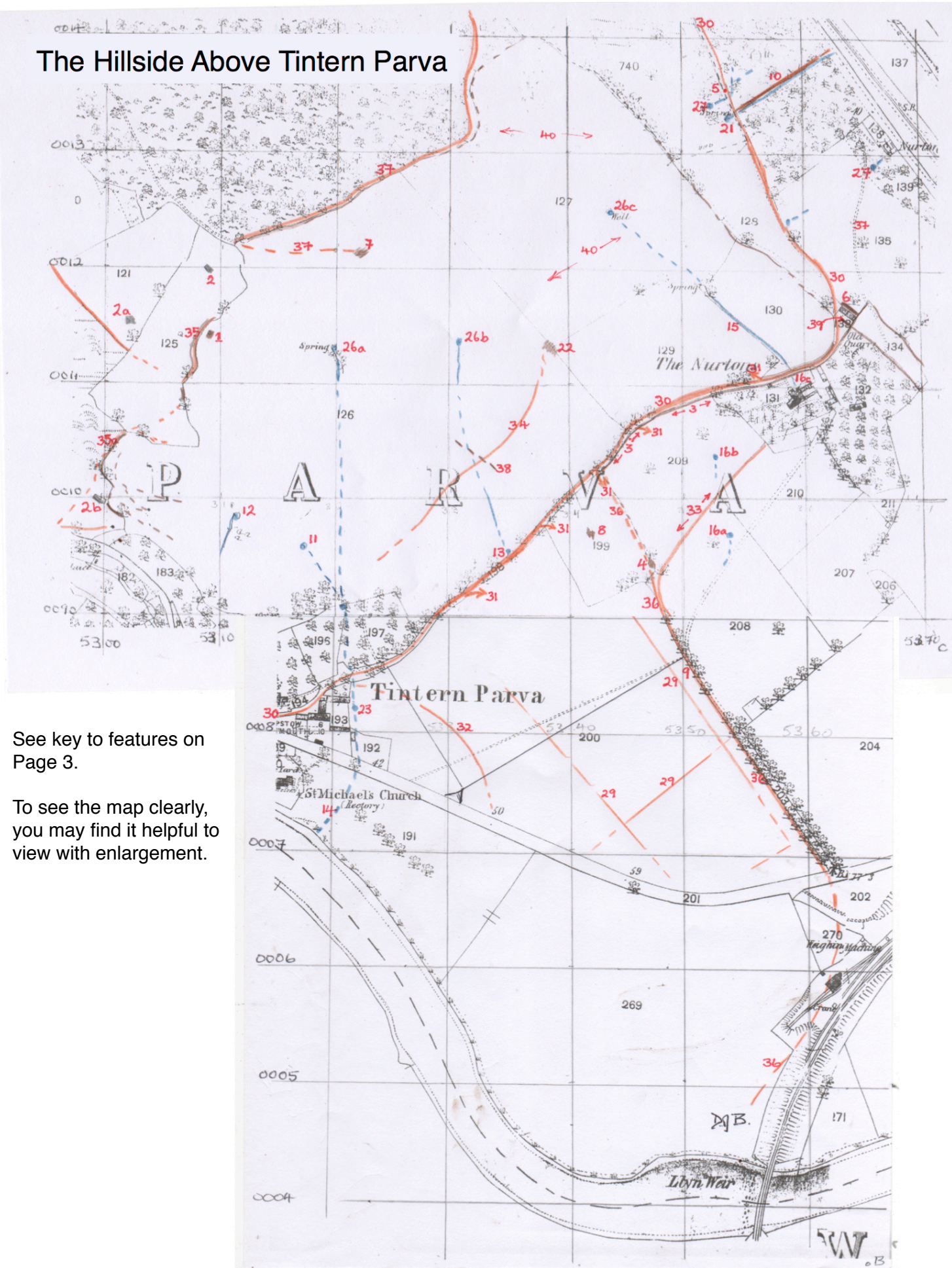
Reference to the 1843 Tithe Map records some of these fields being arable, as is part of The Nurton's larchwood. Neither site would be at all easy to cultivate, putting it mildly.

Many walls are not only difficult to locate, but some are missing off the 1881 map entirely, already fallen or removed to re-use the stone. Of these No 10 is notable; it took many years before it was recognisable to me, (and two others on the lower slopes of Coed Beddick,) so that it was of interest when the LIDAR maps showed them up. These woods still have their charcoal hearths very clear, so do these walls predate or postdate the period when the woods were coppiced regularly for charcoal production? After all there is no value for stone walls in charcoal production...is there?

Largely lacking are reliable dates, but having said that it might be useful to remind ourselves of some reference points.

Roman pottery has been found below The Nurtons, whilst archaeological investigation in St. Michaels churchyard, carried out for Joy Hancox in 2005 demonstrated an iron-working level at 1.8ms and attributed to the Roman period. Are other features of the hillside, visible or yet to be located, also from this period? Pre-Roman occupation signs in this area are 'officially' limited to the south end of Tintern, but many have wondered about the shape of the hilltop adjacent to Coed Beddick. From the 'Dark Ages', once so-called, are references to the site of St. Michael's

The Hillside Above Tintern Parva



See key to features on
Page 3.

To see the map clearly,
you may find it helpful to
view with enlargement.

Key to features

The Hillside above Tintern Parva, aka "The Nortons Hill" in C17 docs

- A1 Stone features at the surface
1. A pile of stones, possible remains of a structure.
 - 2,2a,2b Rectangular features, almost certainly once the basal walls of buildings.
 3. Downside wall of "Highway from Tintern to Llandogo"
 4. SE corner of "The Black Acre"
 5. Stone gatepost, with iron pins, where 'Highway' enters woodland.
 6. Double retaining wall of stables, with cross links; outer wall c 3ms high.
- A2 Stone features below surface
- 7 Mound of stones
 - 8 Centre of "The Black Acre"
 - 9 'Herring-bone' wall
 - 10 Relic wall, (1 of 3), in Coed Beddick shown up in LIDAR photos
- B Features associated with water
- B1 With man-made stonework
- 11 'Fillies spring'; stone culvert runs SE underground from the spring, probably feeding into flow from 16a and emerging below lambing shed in the garden.
 - 12 Vinyard spring – 'Roman'?
 - 13 Culvert emergence into 'The Highway' bank, probably carrying water from 26b
 - 14 Culvert from A466 to river
 - 15 Clay water pipes from spring to The Nurtons house -?c 1800
 - 16a/b/c Other 'spring features' below "The Highway...", with stonework surrounds.
 - 21 "Arthur's Spring" and stone trough beside "The Highway..."
 - 22 Spring zone/wet area with associated stones; early photo shows building nearby.
 - 23 Stone-lined 'well' or drinking trough; depth currently unknown; further excavation?
- B2 Natural
- 26a/b/c Hillside springs above "The Highway..."
 - 27 Springs in Coed Beddick
 - 28 There are other very seasonal 'emergences' of water on the hillside; when 'dry' they may be feeding underground flows or man-made culverts.
- C Linear surface features eg buried boundaries, tracks and field entrances – visible, on older maps or from 'local' knowledge
- 29 Low linear ridges
 - 30 "The Highway from Tintern to Llandogo", as described in C17 docs, of The Nurtons
 - 31 Sloping access points from 30 into adjacent fields
 - 32 Curving track; best seen at times of new, low-growing grass.
 - 33 C19 alignment of drive to The Nurtons; possibly changed to the present one c 1860s
 - 34 Rising track east of the vineyard; serving 22?
 - 35/35a Stoned track above/west of the vineyard; low walls present in part
 - 36 'Track' from Llynweir to "The Highway" on 1833 Enclosure Map of Trellech, (DofB)
 - 37 Other routes on earlier maps.
 - 38 Line of stones at surface; remnant of wall?
 - 39 Line of stones at surface; remnant of wall?
 - 40 ?WW2 plough-lines from aerial photos

Church, though what initially stood at that site remains conjectural to the best of my knowledge. From Mediaeval times we can note the buried 'puddingstone wall' that backs the C19 slipway wall, totally underground, but which yielded pottery fragments from C13 when Joy Hancox's archaeologists explored a short section. And of similar date is an exquisite piece of decorated pot from the 'King's Meadow', attributed to C14 Bristol by Steve Clarke. Colin at Parva Vinyard also has pieces of roof tile dated reliably to around 1500. These, however, are but few and dated. How many other artefacts have we missed, or mis-identified, or are in your possession without you realising that you may have something of interest? We hope we can help if you would like to try us.

Where now?

The term "Highway from Tintern to Llandogo" comes directly from documents held in Gwent Archive and dating to the C17. But we have hardly touched that source of history, nor that in Gloucester, or even Bristol and further afield. Such 'desktop' work can be time-consuming, but some can now be done on-line and could add much to knowledge of this as many other villages.

The other obvious approach is to get to work 'in the field'. Diane Parker is busy mapping, cataloguing and recording the inscriptions of the numerous headstones and grander monuments in St. Mary's churchyard; if it appeals to you further help would be welcome.

The maps show many of the 'wells' of the hillside, but there may be other water sources now hidden and out of use; those known have been recorded by Elsa Wood. Judith thinks there may be other 'culverts' around the vineyard; historical drains of the land for cultivation, (of vines?), or tapping underground flows for drinking water, power, or other purposes? We have an old stone channel under our sitting room at The Nurtons; where it originates or what it served are unknown.

A current interest of mine are the low ridges in the 'Close' in front of Colin and Judith's house. With their agreement I hope to see if there is any sub-surface stonework within them, and we have a bio-geographer locally who can help in interpreting soil cores.

There has also been some local 'geophysics' work. This has revealed interesting sub-surface structures near our house, and so has earlier work done for Joy Hancox here and around St. Michael's.

Dave Tuffrey at The Manor House is currently working to develop a village map with ground plans and basic historical information, (and in more detail, too), of as many of our houses and other buildings that owners would like to share with the community and our visitors. Hopefully a 'starter' sample will be on the website before long, and maybe it will take-off from there. What do you know about your property? - the age(s) of building, particular interesting/novel features, past ownerships and uses. We would love to know, or help your investigations.

This article stems from a visit to the hillside of Parva Vineyard and most of it refers to this area. Clearly most of these comments reveal more of the limitations to our knowledge and understanding than they illuminate our past in Tintern Parva. There's therefore work to be done for those interested. But what about another part of Tintern in similar manner: the west side of the road to Trellech with Barbados, or Chapel Hill or Pont-y-Saison, for instance? I'm well aware of local people with knowledge of these areas; can the rest of us share your knowledge, too?

So, there's lots of possibilities that might repay further work for those interested. Let's not forget the old and well worked references to Tewdric's battle with The Saxons, somewhere around Tintern, the likelihood of a recognised river crossing, maybe on or near the site of our slipway, and the detailed evidence for the importance royalty seemed to have attached to St. Michael's as far back as, and maybe further than, the letters patent of Edward VI in 1553.

In fact it may be quite reasonable to suggest that Tintern Parva may have not just a 'hidden chapter' to its history, but one that appears to have been of some significance to earlier aristocrats and monarchs. If so one can only wonder why their interest.