

Park Farm Roman Villa

During the latter part of the last century Aylburton was host to an eminent archaeologist by the name of Dr. Scott-Garrett.

Early Days

Dr. Charles Scott-Garrett MBE, MC (1885-1972) was a Scotsman, born near Carrickfergus, Co. Antrim. He played in an international rugby trial in 1909 and was also a prominent hockey player. After working in various parts of the country he returned to the Dean and lived at Aylburton.

He actually came to the Forest in 1914 to manage the manufacture of acetone, which was used in the manufacture of munitions, at the Speech House Road Distillation Works near Cannop. He married a Clifton clergyman's daughter and school teacher Gladys Browne (1888-1960) at Bristol in 1916.

During the following years his work led him to travel extensively in England and much of Europe. In 1919 he was awarded the MBE after being nominated by Winston Churchill. Moving back to the Forest in 1930, he and Gladys settled at Sandford House, a big white house in Sandford Road, Aylburton.

Archaeology

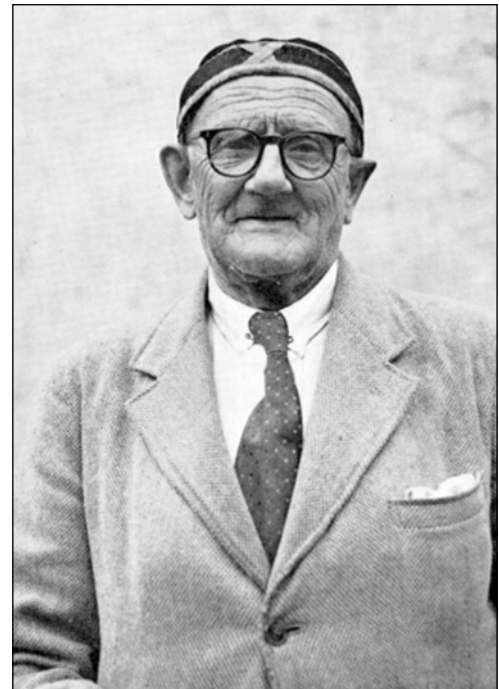
In the years following, Charles became known in the archaeological world after discovering a complete fossil, about 10 feet in length, of an Ichthyosaurus, on the Severn shore at Awre. In 1952 he found the fossil footprint of a prehistoric animal, the Labyrinthodon, on a piece of Triassic sandstone at the foot of Tump Hill in Aylburton when the road was being widened. About seven million years ago this animal left its impression when Aylburton was on the edge of a great Triassic salt lake.

He was the leading archaeologist in the excavation of the Roman Chesters Villa at Woolaston between 1932 and 1935 and, in later years, joined the Forest of Dean Local History Society, participating in their early 1950s digs at the Norman Camp in Littledean and the Tidenham Chase Bronze Age barrow.

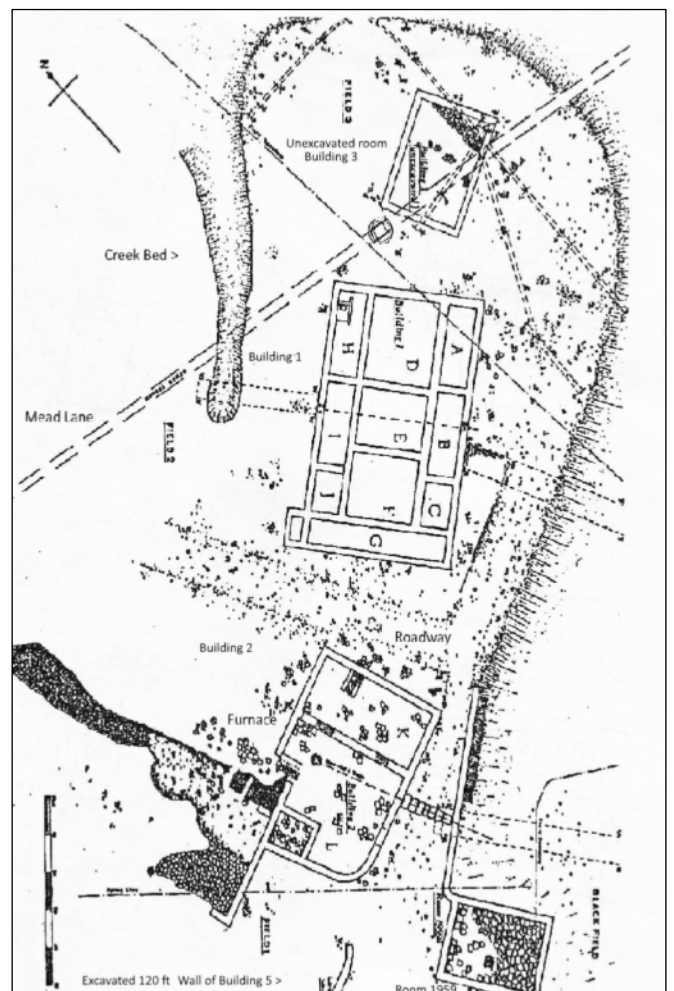
Roman Villa at Park Farm

When a sewerage trench across Park Farm culvert from Aylburton was being dug in 1955, the debris from what appeared to be a Roman villa was discovered. The villa was actually discovered in the fields opposite where Taurus Crafts now is to the one side of Mead Lane. (From a recent stroll I took down the lane however there seems little evidence of the villa now).

On August 9th 1955 Scott-Garrett and his wife Gladys with four other members began a dig that would continue until 18th February 1960. The exploratory dig uncovered the wall of a building. It had a flagstone surround and was later revealed to be the northward wall of a small room in the building. Over the following four and a half years, four buildings were identified. None appeared to include the luxury of baths and decorated floors found at the Chesters site. Here the ground surfaces were mainly flagstones with one coarse tessellated area. In 1960 he returned briefly to the site and completed the excavation of 120ft of a wall in the area of a probable fifth building.



Dr. Charles Scott-Garrett



Maurice Fitchet's 1987 illustration rotated to approximately north-south. A creek surrounds the northern section. The track running left to right is Mead Lane, Aylburton, opposite the present-day Taurus Centre. The top unexcavated building lies across the lane.

Fieldwalking on this site apparently yielded old red sandstone and Jurassic oolite¹, building stone, ceramic roof tiles, iron ore (goethite), abundant tap slag and other iron-making slags, and large lumps of iron (blooms/billets). The pottery was from the 2nd to the mid 4th century AD, and also included considerable amounts of Oxfordshire and late south-east Dorset wares. The discovery of a couple of coins was recorded. One, found in September 1955 14 inches below the turf, was identified as a Trajan from AD 103 and another from the reign of 4th century Constantine.

Evidence of a brazier hearth was also discovered and this was believed to be for a navigation beacon. The large quantity of pottery and other finds suggest that what was uncovered on this site may be only a small part of a large villa, or settlement, and possibly even a naval or military barracks complex.

It was speculated that nearby boats would take the iron ore products to another onward destination and the inscription on a tablet in Lydney Park attests to this possibility.

“To the god Nodens, Titus Flavius Senilis, officer in charge of the supply depot of the fleet, laid this pavement out of money offerings; the work being in charge of Victorinus, interpreter on the Governor’s staff.”

Sadly, Dr. Scott-Garrett’s uncompleted work left many more questions than answers.

¹ Oolite (egg stone) is a [sedimentary rock](#) formed from spherical grains composed of concentric layers.



Example of what a trading station might have looked like at Lydney creek on the present day edge of Aylburton from the Colchester Museum

Forest of Dean Local History Society

www.forestofdeanhistory.org.uk

Our members enjoy a regular programme of talks and historical walks as well as outings both within the Forest and further afield, with one or two events happening every month of the year. Members also receive a quarterly hard copy newsletter with short historical articles as well as news of the Society. Our newsletter won an award from the British Association for Local History in 2016 as the best newsletter in the country. We also regularly email members who have requested it with information about activities by neighbouring societies and county-wide groups.

Our annual journal, *The New Regard*, is highly thought of and we are proud of the fact that over the years four contributors have been short listed for the British Association for Local History award for a published article with two outright winners. This year we published the 33rd volume of research by our members. The journal is an ever increasing source of fascinating information for researchers and casual readers alike.

The Scott-Garrett and Cyril Hart Awards

Each year, in October at the AGM, the society gives two awards:

The Gladys Scott-Garrett award is given for the best presentation to society members during the past year, judged by the committee. This award was established by the will of Dr Charles Scott-Garrett in the 1970s. He was the third President of the Society and a very active member and leader in the Society’s formative years. The award is named in honour of his wife.

Another award, the Cyril Hart award was established in 2008 in memory of Cyril Hart. It is awarded for the best article in the Society’s publication, *The New Regard*, each year, judged by an external expert. Cyril Hart was a founder of the Society and later President after Dr. Scott-Garrett. He was also a Verderer for 50 years and wrote many history books about the Forest.



Dr. Cyril Hart (left) with Dr. Scott-Garrett

The Forest of Dean Local History Society is a superb organisation for the study of all things related to the fascinating history of our area and I would urge anyone with an interest to join the Society.