

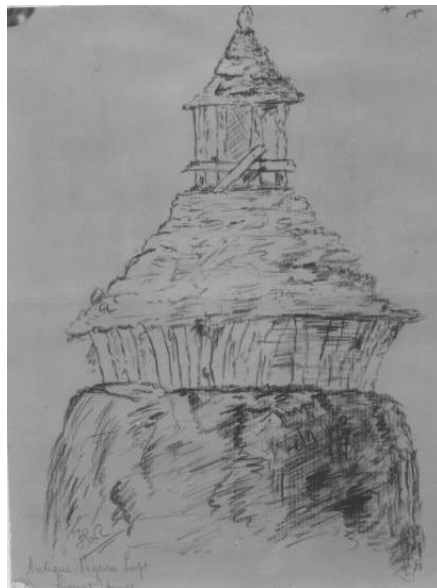
DOVECOTES.

The surviving Dovecote in Eardisland ...is probably of late 17th or early 18th century date...: ¹



If 1675 is taken as the earliest date which can reasonably be described as *late 17th century* then the six specific documentary references to a dovecote in Eardisland which pre-date 1675 must be to another one which no longer survives.

A review of the chronology of these two dovecotes will eventually lead to the question of why the more recent one was built: that there was indeed an earlier one is not in doubt. In addition to the references which I cite later,; *The Old Pigeon Loft at Court House : known to have been still standing in 1850* is the caption to a drawing in the WI Book:



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¹ RCHME, Herefordshire. 1934. Volume 3, page 48.

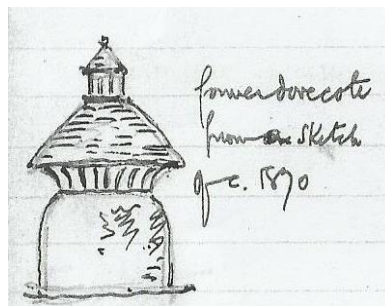
² Both the photographs on this page are from the WI Book, privately published in the village in 1956.

Its position, about 50 yards west of the motte, about the same distance north and slightly west of the tower of the church, can be seen on the Tithe Map,³ which shows that it may have been a circular structure:



That it was indeed circular and that it was still standing circa 1870 was recorded in 1933 in this extract from RCHME Inventory notes for Court House Farm:⁴

There is a sketch extant (owned by Mr. Lee, the Vicarage (Weobley)) of a former dovecote in the farmyard (sketched c.1870). It was a round one of stone with a covered narrow upper stage of timber framing and a lantern. In the grounds is also a circular moat



Its shape suggests a likely early origin.⁵

³ Tithe Map 1844. National Archives copy on microfilm at Herefordshire Record Office where the reference is IR30/14.

⁴ Reproduced with the permission of The English Heritage Archive, Swindon.

⁵ "The earliest dovecotes are all circular with stone walls" [Stainburn I.R. "Dovecotes and Pigeon Lofts in Herefordshire." 1979].

It can also be seen in the background in a drawing of the church dated 1837:



.....

Hinton and Twyford were both independent manors and may well have had dovecotes; indeed at Hinton, on the Tithe Map (1844) are to be found close to and north-east of the main buildings *Pigeon House Meadow* and adjacent to it *Pigeon House Croft*. At Twyford there is no such evidence, perhaps not surprisingly bearing in mind the amount of time that has elapsed since Twyford was administered as a manor.⁶ These, and the sad and recent demise of the dovecote at Burton, are dealt with in detail in other Papers.

Various authorities⁷ agree that it was the Norman Conquest that introduced dovecotes to England and that, certainly in Herefordshire, the earliest are all circular with stone walls. (See note 4 on the previous page). It is therefore reasonable to deduce that the Eardisland dovecote shown in the WI Book drawing, quite close to the motte, may well have dated back to early post Conquest times.

The earliest documentary reference to a dovecote in Eardisland dates to 1335/1336 when *...a certain dovecot that is worth p.a. 6s 8d.*⁸ is recorded within the Inquisition Post Mortem Edmund de Mortuo Mari, who died 9 Edward III, a ward of the King.

Next thereafter comes a reference in 1469 when, in the accounts of the royal bailiff there is record of *...£4 for the farm and issue of diverse pasture and meadow land there (Erleslane) with all houses and closes of the manor and all dovecotes as the lord granted...*⁹ Whether “dovecotes” is indeed record of more than one dovecote or whether the wording is intended simply to cover all eventualities, is open to discussion.

The next mention is not until 1607 when *...one mansion house, one dove house...* is the wording.¹⁰ This is followed by four (1616, 1626, 1627, and 1655)

⁶ See separate Paper on this topic. Burton’s dovecote, also, is dealt with separately.

⁷ Including Stainburn (see note 4) and Watkins, A., in WFC 1890.

⁸ TNA C135/45/22 Slide 6547-6549 (9 Ed III 1336).

⁹ PRO SC6/861/19.

¹⁰ HRO HD2/3/14.

mentions in the Court House deeds.¹¹ The last three of these specify “*one dove house*” the first ...*Dovehouses* but this instance is more clearly a matter of all-encompassing legal wording. Put into context it reads*all houses edifices buildings Barnes Stables Dovehouses Courts Curtillages*..... [The description continues...].

Thus far then, almost certainly only one dovecote in Eardisland, but before long it was to be joined by the one which still¹² survives. This was described in 1934¹³ as:*a square brick building, gabled on each face and with a central lantern and weather vane; it is probably of late 17th or early 18th century date. Condition- Good.*

The earliest document which may refer to this building is the Will of John Trumper dated 17th September 1745,¹⁴ wherein is mention of ...*the Porch House*¹⁵ in Eardisland aforesaid enclosed with walls and wherein a fish pond and brick building now stands. This raises the questions, to which there are no supportable answers; if this does refer to the present dovecote, why is it not described as such? The wording of the document is specific throughout, as one would expect in a Will of such date.....and, if not, then to what does it refer?

To maintain chronology and comprehensive record of this topic, it must next be mentioned that when Nunhouse Farm was leased in 1817 there was specific reference that the lessee was to have *free use of pasturage on the Pidgeon House Close*....¹⁶ Whilst I only have this information from the Accessions Catalogue at Herefordshire Records Office and have not yet seen the document itself, on the face of it this seems to suggest that at some earlier date there was another dovecote somewhere on land belonging to Nunhouse Farm, formerly ‘The Nunhouse’ of which several and various spellings are extant.

But to return to the Will of John Trumper:

That in relatively recent times the ground floor level of the surviving dovecote was devoted to uses unconnected with pigeons/doves is considerably recorded¹⁷ but, together with various attributes of the building itself, Trumper’s Will serves only to increase speculation as to the intentions of whoever had it built in the first place.

Research and the writing of various other Papers is ongoing and may eventually make it possible to reach a conclusion. For the moment, however, the original intended use of the ground floor, and indeed of the whole building, must be recorded as “unknown”.

.....*FINIS*.....

¹¹ HRO B16/5,9,11/12 and 20/21.

¹² It is now 15th April 2007.

¹³ RCHME, Herefordshire. 1934. Vol.3, page 48.

¹⁴ HRO D32/183

¹⁵ Nowadays, but only since the 1930s, inaccurately, called “The Old Manor House”. No Lord of the Manor ever lived there, nor were manorial Courts ever held there.

¹⁶ HRO B16/56.

¹⁷ My re-assessment of Schools in Eardisland is ongoing.

