



General view of site.

# HEN DOMEN

by *Philip Barker*

FOUR years after the battle of Hastings, William the Conqueror gave Roger de Montgomery, his kinsman and close friend, the honour of Shrewsbury, with territory which extended beyond Offa's Dyke to the upper Severn. Before 1074, Roger built a timber castle on a ridge of boulder clay overlooking the river and the ancient ford of Rhyd-Whyman, in an area of 'waste' used by three Saxon thegns as a hunting ground, and gave it, nostalgically, his family name. This castle was to be a base for launching attacks into central Wales, and, in 1074, the *Annales Cambriae* has the laconic entry "From Montgomery Hugh (Roger's son) devastated Cardigan".

The date of the building of the first Montgomery castle is therefore fixed between 1070 and 1074. In 1223, the young Henry III (he was 16) was shown a site for a

new and impregnable stone castle. The building of this new castle a mile away led eventually to the abandonment of the timber castle, whose site has since remained undisturbed. This has proved to be of critical importance as the excavations of the last seven years have shown that the tenuous remains of the castle's latest buildings lie immediately under the thin turf which has developed on the site during the seven centuries since its abandonment.

The excavations have been carried out, first at weekends and latterly during the summer, under the direction of P. A. Barker, of Birmingham University Extra-Mural Department with the aid of the Shrewsbury Archaeological Research Group, the Priory Boys' School, Shrewsbury, and a wide range of volunteers from elsewhere.

The motte ditch has been sectioned in two places, and an area

of about 4,500 sq. ft. of the bailey has been stripped. In 1966 two sections were cut across the outer ditch and in 1967 a section was cut across a chord of the motte.

The motte ditch proved to have been recut six times and the plans of five successive motte bridges were recovered. All the earlier bridges were between 10 and 12 ft. wide. A sill-beam 10 in. square and 14 ft. long, preserved by water-logging, was found inserted in a slot cut into the bottom of the earliest ditch, which presumably dates from 1070-74. Mortices cut into each end showed that the bridge above must have been at least 12 feet wide. Only the last bridge, dating from perhaps the end of the 13th century, was a narrow gang plank type of the kind familiar from the Bayeux Tapestry.

## The Earliest Buildings

The bailey area has not yet been fully excavated to the natural