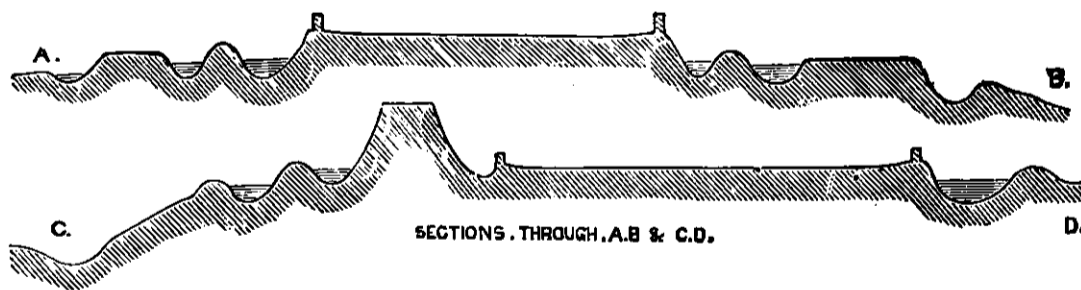
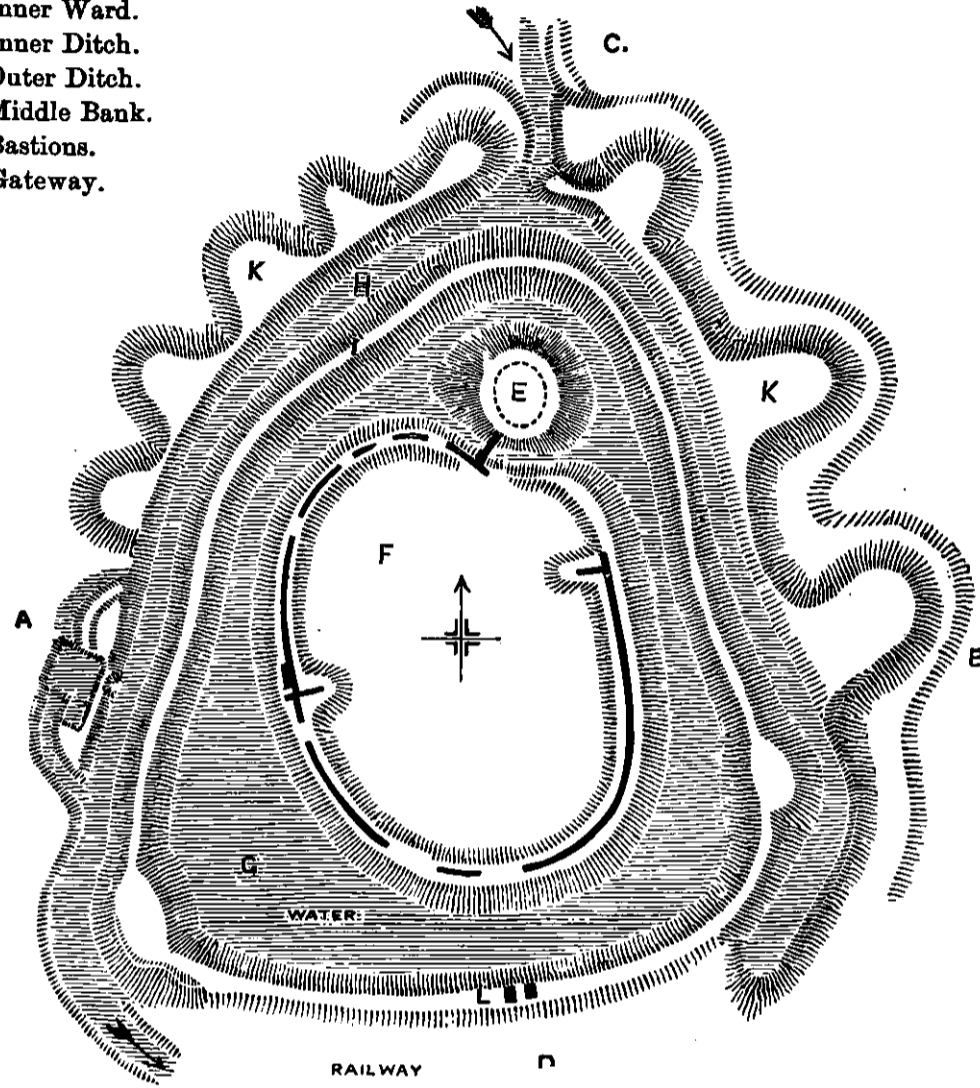




REFERENCES.

- E Keep.
- F Inner Ward.
- G Inner Ditch.
- H Outer Ditch.
- I Middle Bank.
- K Bastions.
- L Gateway.



BERKHAMSTED CASTLE.

*(By permission of the Royal Archaeological Institute).*

## Berkhampstead Castle.

BY THE REV. H. FOWLER, M.A.

The materials for the history of this ancient locality are very abundant. The difficulty with which I have had to cope has been to compress a long story within a reasonable compass without depriving it of its interest. I have made free use of the valuable compilations of the county historians. I have also looked into the chronicles myself, and verified many of the statements. I have to express special indebtedness to the admirable book of the Rev. J. W. Cobb, late rector of Berkhampstead, the chief modern authority for the antiquities of this parish.

Leland, who came to Berkhampstead by way of the Chilterns (about 1538), describes this place as "an old castle in a roote of a hill, standing somewhat low." The hill to which he refers is no doubt White Hill, about a mile to the north-west, where the house called "Berkhampstead Place" now stands. Berkhampstead Common on the north is also high ground, and at a short distance on the east there is a hill, the railway which brought us here passing through a cutting.

Here at the low-level we are in a gorge of the chalk. It has been described by Mr. J. G. Clark (a very high authority) as a "small lateral combe descending from the north and east and opening here on the main valley." The valley is that of the Bulbourn, a stream which joins the Gade, five miles lower down, at Two Waters. The water which we see here (in the moats) is furnished by a small brook which in primitive times, we are told, created a great swamp; in the midst of this morass was a natural elevation, described by Mr. Clark as a "tump of gravel"; this is now under our feet in this central court. The defences of the place were arranged around it.

The fortress is of Saxon origin; no Roman associations have been found for Berkhampstead, if we except the Roman military road, Akeman Street, which passes through the town on the line of the modern road leading from Watford towards Tring and Bicester. A British track way was probably on the same line. On Berkhampstead Common in primitive times was an extensive wood, called (in a 13th century charter) "The Frith." Frithsden Coppice is the remains of it. There is a Frith at Hitchin and elsewhere. The word means *peace* or *protection*.

It may be connected with the institution of Frank-pledge, the mutual security which the men of a Hundred pledged to one another. It is not improbable that the open-air meetings of the Hundred were held in the Frith beside the primitive earthworks called "Gryme's Dyke." At Gryme's Hou in Norfolk—a name which means "The (Host's hill" it is known that a Hundred Court was held; (see Mr. Gomme's "Primitive Folkmoets"). Gryme's Dyke, as far as its name is concerned, may be compared with Goblin Grove, which is not far off. The Hundred here was that of Treung, or Tring, as we learn from the Domesday Survey. The name has been explained as "Tyr-ing"—the field of the war god. In the reign of Edward III. this Hundred was consolidated with that of Danais; the two forming the Hundred of Dacorum—a barbarous word, which Salmon thinks is a corruption of Danais-Cum-Tring. The lordship of the Hundred seems to have been held by the owner of Berkhamstead. We may perhaps infer the great antiquity of the Fortress from the name of the town. This in the Anglo-Saxon chronicles is "Beorhhampstede," signifying the homestead lying near the Beorh (Burg), or fortified place. This explanation implies the existence of a castle when the town was named.

It is a probable opinion that this was a royal fortress in Mercian times. The only evidence of it, however, is this—In the reign of Edward the Confessor it belonged to Earl Harold, whose Thane Edmar held it of him (this is from the Domesday Survey). Harold, we know, acquired by his marriage the estates of the Aldermen of Mercia, successors of the Kings, and it is probable that Berkhamstead came to him as a part of their patrimony.

The early history of this site is a blank. The County Historians state on the authority of Spelman that a Saxon Council was held here in 697. But this opinion is exploded. The Council was assembled by Wightred, King of Kent: and according to the Anglo-Saxon chronicle, its chief purpose was to settle the affairs of the Kentish Church. It is most improbable that it would have been held in the dominions of Mercia, whose King Ethelred Pending was not subject to Wightred. The name is given in the Anglo-Saxon chronicle as "Baccancelde"; Kemble conjectures this to be Brasted in Kent.

This Council then has nothing to do with our subject.

The Saxon fortress first comes into view in the year 1066, a very important crisis of our history. In relating what occurred at Berkhamstead, I propose to follow the guidance of Professor Freeman, the great authority for the Norman Conquest.

The battle of Hastings was fought on 14th October. Dover Castle was then reduced, and Duke William, passing by London, which defied him, devastated the country westward. "His plan was," says Mr. Freeman, "to surround the city with a wide circle of wasted country, till sheer isolation should compel its defenders to submit. South and west of London he was master from Dover to Wallingford." (William of Poitiers, the Duke's chaplain, states that he crossed the Thames at Wallingford). "His course now was to march on till the lands north and east of London should be thoroughly wasted and subdued. He followed out the plan till he reached Berkhamstead. The troops in London were commanded by Ansgar the staller (*i.e.*, steward) of the city. He sent an envoy to Berkhamstead. The envoy was won over by William. By this time the spirit of London itself had failed. At Berkhamstead the Conquest received the ratification of the conquered."

What took place is thus tersely described by the Saxon chronicler: "At Bearkhamstede there came to meet him (Duke William) Ealdred Archbishop (of York), Eadgar, child (*i.e.*, the Atheling), Edwin, Earl, and Morcar, Earl, and all the best men of London; and they bowed to him for need (*i.e.*, from necessity), and they gave hostages, and swore to him oaths (of allegiance); and he promised that he would be a good lord to them." The interview no doubt took place here, within the compass of this enclosing wall. We do not know the date—perhaps the beginning of December. William of Poitiers adds that the diadem was offered to William, and he gave to Edgar Atheling the kiss of peace. The way was now open to London. Thither William proceeded; he was crowned, as we know, at Westminster, on Midwinter Day, (*i.e.*, Christmas Day).

No attention can be paid to the assertion of Thierry, the French historian (1825), that Frederick or Frithric, Abbot of St. Albans, blocked the Conqueror's course between Berkhamstead and London by cutting down trees. There is no authority for this in any of the

Chronicles. It appears to be purely imaginary. Or it may have arisen out of a misapprehension of some passages in the *Gesta Abbat*. The story has been copied into various modern books. I think we should note it as a popular fallacy.

A second conference at Berkhamstead is supposed to have taken place by those who accept the story of Abbot Frithric as given by Matthew Paris. I have tried in vain to reconcile the inconsistencies of this account. It will be safest, I think, to follow the guidance of Mr. Freeman. He has fully discussed the story in an appendix to his history of the Norman Conquest, and pronounces it to be mythical in all its details.

The legend is that the Abbot, in a time of general revolt against the Conqueror's tyranny, was director of all the English forces in the south assembled under Edgar Atheling. Their progress gives a great deal of trouble to William, who is persuaded by Lanfranc, the Primate, to make overtures of concession. A conference is appointed at Berkhamstead; here Abbot Frithric compels the King to swear on all the relics of the church of St. Alban to observe the laws of King Edward.

It is now well ascertained that before Lanfranc was made Primate (in 1070) the national revolt had been suppressed. The alleged meeting at Berkhamstead is an echo (as Mr. Freeman says) of that which was held in 1066.

Abbot Frithric was a real person, and he may have been patriotic, but his life, as given by Matt. Paris, is romance, and not history. The Saxon fortress was given by William, to his half-brother, Robert, Earl of Mortaigne, whom he created Earl of Cornwall. Camden says that Earl Robert built the castle. He probably either rebuilt or enlarged it, but there is no record. Mr. Clark thinks that the great mound is original Saxon work; that the middle bank, or rampart, may have been added by Earl Robert, and some of the rubble work of these walls, following the Saxon lines, may belong to the Norman period.

The Domesday survey tells us nothing about the castle. The Earl of Cornwall's Manor was rated at 13 hides; it contained 26 plough-lands. [A plough-land here is estimated in a document of James I.'s time at 150 acres, or thereabouts.] The woods were sufficient to feed 1,000

swine. The town owed homage and toll to the lord of the Castle. A priest is named, no doubt the Rector of Berkhamstead, who had to minister to 52 burgesses. There must have been a church here in the Norman period. A certain ditcher (*jossarius*) is mentioned as holding half a hide. He was probably the officer who had to look after the Castle moats.

In 1104, Henry, Earl of Moretaine or Moreton, son of Robert, forfeited the Castle to King Henry I. by acts of rebellion. The king dismantled it, and afterwards bestowed it (for life) upon his Chancellor Randolph, who was allowed to restore it. Matthew Paris gives the following incident relating to his occupation:—"In 1123 the king, having kept Christmas at Dunstable, set out on a visit to Berkhamstead. Randolph, who was to be his host, an arrogant and excitable man, now in weak health, rode out to receive him. As he was conducting the royal party, on reaching the top of a hill from which the Castle was viewed, he became so much elated that he fell from his horse. Thereupon a monk of St. Albans rode over him inadvertently. The monk had suffered from the rapacity of the Chancellor, whose career was cut short by this untimely accident."—[Matt. Paris, Chron. Mag ii., 150.]

There is evidence that Henry II. held courts here. The Earldom of Cornwall had reverted to him on the death of Reginald de Dunstanville. It was this king who granted the first Charter to the town (borough), given at Oxford in 1156. The wardenship of the Castle, probably a lucrative appointment, was conferred by him on Archbishop Thomas-à-Becket, who was accused in 1164 of not having accounted to the king for its emoluments.

In 1206 King John gave the Castle in Fee-farm to his minister, Geoffrey Fitz Piers, Earl of Essex. It was he who founded in Berkhamstead the hospitals of St. John the Baptist and St. John the Evangelist. It would be interesting to ascertain, if it were possible, whether the erection of the early English chancel of the parish church was promoted by his munificence. He died in 1212. His son, Geoffrey de Mandeville, espoused the cause of the Barons, and was deprived of his estates by John, who entrusted the Castle to his adherent Richard Fitz-Count. The works were then put in a state of defence.

In 1215 (according to Matthew Paris), the Castellan of

Berkhampstead was dispatched with a strong force to watch the army of the Barons in London. King John died October 18th, 1216. The Castle was then held by Waleran, the German, for Henry III. The siege of this fortress is an important incident in its history; unfortunately we have very few particulars. I give the account of Matthew Paris—"About this time Prince Louis of France, having failed in his attack on Dover, determined to reduce the minor castles of England. Hertford was first attacked; it surrendered in three weeks. He then marched to Berkhampstead (on the 6th December), bringing up his engines of war and surrounding the castle with his forces. The garrison made a spirited defence. The English Barons had pitched their tents on the north side under the shelter of a wood. Waleran made a dash upon their quarters, carrying off much of their baggage and capturing the banner of William de Mandeville. In a second sortie, made from the north gate, the Barons were ignominiously driven from their dinners. Waleran's men (afterwards) killed a large number of the French; many were drowned in the ditches. The brave defenders held the works for a fortnight; on the 20th December they surrendered with the consent of the king, on the condition of retaining their arms and horses. Prince Louis then marched away to St. Albans. At the termination of the war, in September, 1217, the Castle, of course, reverted to the king."

In 1227 Henry III. gave the earldom of Cornwall with all its possessions here to his brother Richard, commonly known as the "King of the Romans." Many incidents of his eventful life are connected with the Castle. In 1239 his wife Isabella, Countess of Gloucester, died here, (she was buried at Beaulieu). In 1242 (the *Dunstable Chronicle* informs us) Earl Richard repaired the Castle. In 1250, at Christmas, his second wife Senchea, sister of the Queen, gave birth here to a son, who was named Edmund, after Edmund Rich, the canonized Archbishop of Canterbury. He was baptized, probably in the Castle chapel, by Archbishop Boniface, the Queen's uncle.

The Countess Senchea died here in 1261. In 1254 the Earl erected here a tower of three stories, covered with lead. It seems to have been a wooden tower, for the Chronicler says—"so many carts were pressed for conveying the timber from the park of Soingdon (or Sundon,



in Bedfordshire,) that the business of the market at Dunstable was greatly impeded." The tower may have been placed on one of these mounds—(see the plan). In 1272 Earl Richard, who for twelve years had held the titular dignity of King of Almaine, died here on the 2nd April. He was buried at the Cistercian Monastery of Hales, which he had founded. His son Edmund, Earl of Cornwall, succeeded him in the lordship of Berkhamstead. His attention was chiefly devoted to the sumptuous college of Bonhommes, founded by him at Ashridge in 1276 in honour of the "Sang Royal"—(Ashridge is about three miles to the north). There he died without issue in 1300, and there his heart was buried. King Edward I., who held a Parliament at Ashridge in 1290, gave the Castle in dower to his second wife, Margaret of France. Edward II. took it from her (not, I suppose, without compensation) and bestowed it, with the Earldom of Cornwall and many other honours, on his favourite, Piers Gaveston. Gaveston's marriage with Margaret de Clare, the King's niece, is stated by Dugdale to have been celebrated at the Castle, in the presence of the king. We know that Gaveston's career was ignominiously closed at Blacklow-hill in 1312. I may add that in January, 1315, his remains were pompously re-interred by Edward in the church of the Dominican Friars, then recently founded by him at King's Langley.

After this the Castle appears to have been neglected, and to have fallen into dis-repair. At this period Ashridge had greater attractions for royal visitors. About the year 1336 Berkhamstead again came into favour. At that date King Edward III. promoted his eldest son Edward, the Black Prince, to the dignity of Duke of Cornwall, (he was then only six years old,) granting to him the Castle, manor, and vill, with the park and Honour of Berkhamstead, "to hold to him," (as the document says,) "and to the heirs of him and the eldest sons of the heirs of the Kings of England and Dukes of the said place, for ever." The king then undertook the repair of the Castle. A survey of the dilapidations was made. The report, dated (at Berkhamstead) St. Valentine's Day, 1337, is extant, and is given *in extenso* by Mr. Cussans.

This will be a convenient opportunity for pointing out the features of the place on this plan, which is copied,

on an enlarged scale, from that of Mr. G. T. Clark, given in the *Archæological Journal* of 1873.

PLAN OF SITE.

This is a concentric Castle, the defences being arranged in successive lines round the inner ward or bailey. This is a sort of oval in shape. Mr. Cussans gives the measurements as 500ft. from north to south, and 300ft. from east to west. It was enclosed by a strong wall, about 7ft. thick; some of the remaining fragments are about 25ft. high. Within this were the Castle habitations. The projecting masses which we see on the east and west sides may be remains of these buildings or of towers. The end of the transverse wall here, on the east side, is about 70ft. from the outer wall. This latter is raised on a bank. The inner ward was surrounded by a deep moat enclosed within a bank or rampart. We shall be able to walk round this presently. At the south-west corner this moat is 150ft. wide. The great tower or keep on the north, was raised on this mound, which is 60ft. high; a loop moat divided it from the inner enceinte. Access to it was afforded by this wall, carried across the ditch, and serving the purpose of a bridge. The mound (which is artificial and is very steep) is 40ft. in diameter at the top.

The earth rampart, or middle bank, was probably fortified with a palisade; it is about 8ft. wide at the top. Towards the southern angles it is strengthened by two mounds, about 20ft. high, on which perhaps were wooden towers. These flank the principal gate of the fortress, which was on the south side (in the gap here). Opposite to this, on the bank, was a stone gateway. We shall see the two blocks of flintwork, which are the remains of it. Beyond the rampart was the outer moat. On the south side it is now filled up by the railroad. The Barbican, or outer gateway, must have stood on an outwork here. Beyond this was a marsh or swamp, extending about 400 yards southwards to Castle-street. The approach from the town is supposed to have been by a narrow causeway raised above the swamp. The gates were connected by drawbridges. The outer moat exists on two sides of the triangle. Beyond this are the outworks, consisting of a series of bold earth bastions, of steep declivity. They appear to be higher than the rampart. In front of the outworks was a narrow ditch. At the extreme north

there is a gap between the bastions, through which flows the small brook which supplied the moats. These extensive works must have required a large force to man them.

## THE SURVEY.

The survey informs us there was a Barbican, for its repair is estimated at £40. The great gate of the inner ward had a turret, which required buttressing; its staircase and upper chamber are mentioned. Between this gate and the mound of the keep were two towers; one of them was, no doubt, here (at north-east). The great tower, or citadel, was split on the north side from the base to the summit, and was in danger of falling; its repair was to cost £215 (*i. e.*, about £3,000 in present money). A gate is described, apparently at the north-west, as Derne Gate "Derne" means secret, or private. This was probably a postern. It was connected by drawbridges, with gates on the rampart and outworks, leading to the park. This must have been the gate by which the sally was made at the siege in 1216.

There were two towers on the west side between Derne Gate and the Great Gate. The survey mentions the Castle Houses, the Great Hall or Painted Chamber, the Great Chapel, and other chapels. The total cost of the repairs is set down at £740, equivalent to about £11,000 now. The master mason was John de Rysseburg.

The reparation fitted the castle for royal occupancy. That it was frequently in use we have evidence in letters and state documents of king Edward III., dated at Berkhamstead. With regard to the ownership of the Black Prince, the first and most illustrious of the Dukes of Cornwall, I may mention one incident recorded by Froissart. In the year 1361, shortly after the prince's marriage with his cousin, the fair Joan Plantagenet, Countess of Kent, he received here the king's orders to prepare to undertake the government of Aquitaine. Soon after Christmas the same year, on the eve of his departure, the king and queen Philippa, accompanied by the Dukes of Clarence and Lancaster, and the Lord Edmund came to the Castle to take leave of the Prince and Princess. They were together several days, during which space (says the Chronicler) there were many serious debates between the king and prince, and also many notable diversions and entertainments. The Black Prince

was a liberal benefactor to the College of Ashridge, of which he was regarded as the second founder.

In the parish church here is a small brass, commemorating John Raven, one of the Prince's esquires, who fought at the battle of Crecy (he died, according to Chauncey, in 1395). Mr. Boutell dates the brass 1365. In the reign of Richard II. the poet Chaucer was appointed clerk of the king's works at this Castle. He held the like appointment at the Tower of London and the palace of Westminster, in 1389. He was allowed to discharge the duties by deputy.—I must hasten on. We learn from the Register of Abbot Wheathampstead (Reg. I., 298) that in 1458 Henry VI. was staying at the Castle, being occupied in a fruitless attempt to arrange a compact between the rival families.

In the Wars of the Roses Berkhamstead played no part. When Edward IV. obtained the crown he gave the wardenship of the Castle to John Lord Wenlock, whose mansion at Someries we visited last year. The career of this brilliant intriguer was closed, as we heard, in 1471, at the battle of Tewkesbury, where he fought on the Lancastrian side. I may note that his collateral ancestor, Canon William Wenlock, whose monument we saw at Luton, had been rector of Berkhamstead in 1349, when only in minor orders.

About the year 1476 King Edward bestowed the Castle with its royalties upon his mother, Cecilia, Duchess of York, the daughter of Ralph Nevile, Earl of Westmoreland. "The Rose of Raby" was noted for her beauty, and also for her fortitude. She passed through many vicissitudes. We may infer from the "Orders of the Household of the Right Excellent Princess Cecil," [preserved among the State documents and quoted by Mr. Cobb], that her life here was one of dignified retirement. We have seen in the church the memorial of Robert Incent, a servant of the Duchess (who died in 1485). He was, perhaps, one of her gentleman ushers. He was a benefactor to the chapel of St. John the Baptist. His son, Dr. John Incent, warden of the Fraternity of St. John Baptist, and Dean of St. Paul's, is famous as the founder of the Grammar School here, now so flourishing.

In 1487 the Duchess appointed Ralph Verney, steward of the Lordship, and keeper of the park. In the parish register is the record of his burial in 1545. He was

appointed to a similar office at King's Langley, the Princess Cecily being also the owner of the palace there.

Amongst her household here are enumerated a Dean of the Chapel, an Almoner, Cofferer, Marshal, Clerk of the Kitchen, and Gentlemen Ushers. She had the patronage of the church, and twice presented to the rectory. She died at an advanced age in 1496, the eleventh year of Henry VII., whose Queen, Elizabeth, was her granddaughter. She was buried in the chapel at Fotheringay. In her will (quoted by Mr. Cussans) she assigns her plate to defray the expenses of carrying her body "from the Castle of Berkhamstead to the College of Fodringtonhay." There her husband Richard, Duke of York, was buried. She bequeathed to the parish church of Much Berkhamstede a coope (cope) of blew bawdekyn. In a window of St. John's Chapel in the church her shield of arms is displayed. The Duchess was the last royal occupier.

When Henry VIII. was in this neighbourhood, in 1530, he lodged at Ashridge, where Thos. Waterhouse, the last rector of the college, was his host. The Castle was then in a dilapidated condition—this we gather from Leland, who in his itinerary, written about this time, says "I marked dyverse towers in the middle warde of the Castell, and the Dungeon-hill, but to my sight it is much in ruine." Thirty years later it must have ceased to be tenanted, the work of destruction having commenced. Sir Edward Cary, Master of the Jewel House to Queen Elizabeth, was made Steward of the Honour in 1560, he obtained a lease from the Queen, assigning to him the site of the Castle at the yearly rent of a Red Rose. He erected on White-hill the mansion called "Berkhamstead Place," described in a document as "built of flint and Tatterhale (Totternhoe) stone, chequer fashion." The tradition is that he adopted the best stonework of the Castle as material for this house.

Half a century later Camden describes the Castle site, somewhat vaguely, as a heap of stones and ruined walls. There were, however, remains of the domestic buildings up to the time of Salmon's visit, about 1728. He saw chimneys and walls, all the windows of which looked inwards (*i. e.*, I suppose, towards the court). Stukeley observed on the west side a staircase, which he supposed to belong to the great chapel; none of these features are visable now. I may note that the Royal stables (as we

learn from a 13th century inquisition) were outside the precincts; they are supposed to have stood in Castle-street.

The tale of the Castle is now told. I have only time to note in regard to the manor, that in the church are the monuments of some of its lessees, persons of distinction, who were occupiers of Berkhamstead Place, among them that of Sir Adolphus Cary\* (who died in 1609), his helmet hangs in the transept; and of John Sayer, the famous cook of King Charles II., and founder of the almshouses in the town (in 1681).

In 1862 the estates of the Honour were conveyed to the guardians of the second Earl Brownlow, The Right Hon. John William Spencer Brownlow Egerton Cust, the possessor of Ashridge, then a minor. The royalties of the Duchy of Cornwall, including the site of the Castle, were reserved to the Prince of Wales, who, as Duke of Cornwall, is the present owner.

The 3rd Earl Brownlow, brother of the late Earl, is now lord of the manor, lessee of the site, and custodian of these historical and picturesque ruins. To him we are indebted for permission to encamp here to-day.

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