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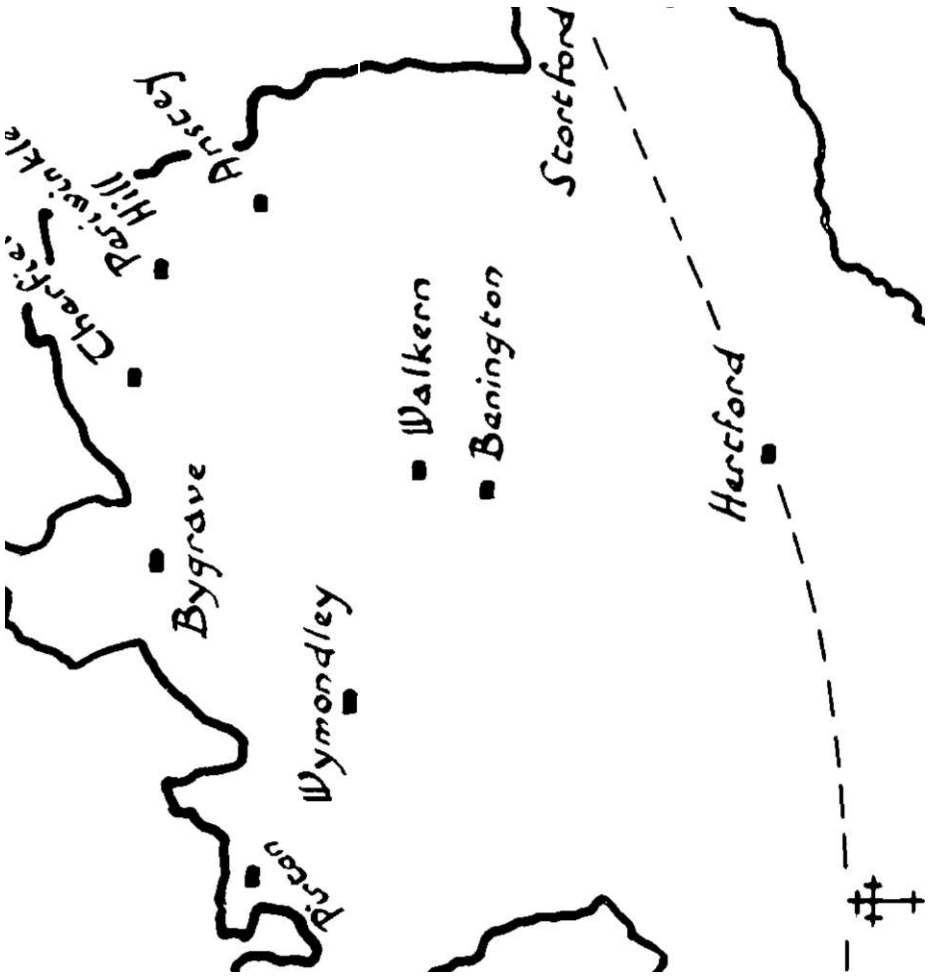

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Hertfordshire Castles

BY HUGH BRAUN, F.S.A., F.R.I.B.A.

The County of Hertfordshire, covering as it does but a small area, and this having no clearly defined geographical boundaries, is not an easy district to survey on such a subject as castrametation. For the same reason, it is somewhat difficult to plan this paper.

It would seem best to group the castles together in consideration of their importance, and then treat each group separately, taking the more important castles first, as these have the effect of limiting the areas in which lesser castles are likely to be found.

Although the north-east and south-west boundaries of the shire are geographically indefinite, the north-west and south-east give some clue to the general economic situation. The south-eastern fringe of the shire rests partly along the valleys of the Lea and Stort, a fertile district not too remote from the Metropolis, and a barrier which has to be crossed by routes leading to this.

Thus we find founded along this line the two important royal castles of Hertford and Stortford. To this group of first-line strongholds must be added that of Berkhamstead, although it stands, in so far as the purpose of its foundation is concerned, in a class entirely by itself.

The eastern fringe of the shire abuts on the wealthy county of Essex, covered, since early Norman times, by the estates of great feudal lords. Thus we find, on this side of Hertfordshire, outpost castles belonging to this group. Such are Anstey, Benington and Walkern. Also belonging to this group, but on the opposite side of the shire, and bordering on the rich lands of the Ouse basin, is the baronial castle of Pirton.

The south-western lobe of Hertfordshire which contains the town of Hemel Hempstead is, with the exception of Berkhampstead Castle, free from such structures. This is due to the fact that the south-

western fringe of the shire is governed by that great stronghold with its background of wild Chiltern country, and also by reason of the powerful domination of the abbots of St. Albans.

The northern edge of the shire abuts on the bleak Icknield downland, but here, nevertheless, are a few small castles. Wymondley appears to be a small baronial castle. Therfield has probably had a curious history and a short life, and the little castle at Barkway nearby was probably equally insignificant.

Finally we arrive at the end of the story with the fortified manor houses, castles only in name. In the north of the county is the fourteenth century castle of Bygrave, and in the south-west the very late castle of More, which dates from the fifteenth century.

The chief Roman route through Hertfordshire was the great North Road, Ermine Street, which passed from London towards the western fringe of the Fens, and thence to York and Scotland. The route crossed the Lea a little to the west of the present town of Ware, and it was probably the failure of the bridge at this point, during the interregnum of the Dark Ages, that caused the abandoning of a long stretch of the Roman road on either side of the river crossing. The consequent diversion of the route upstream to a better fording place was the probable reason for the founding of the town of HERTFORD at that place instead of on the line of Ermine Street itself.

The Lea was an important river in Saxon times, and, being navigable as far as Hertford, the town became something of an inland port. Situation on a navigable river, however, had its disadvantages during the ninth and tenth centuries, by reason of the persistent raids of the Danes. It is not surprising, therefore, that Edward the Elder in the year 913 fortified the town with an earthen rampart, creating it, by so doing, into a *burh.*

The Hertford *burh* was rather larger than the majority of these Saxon fortified towns, and lay on both sides of the river as a roughly circular enclosure

of about twenty acres. The lines can still be followed, having the old main road, the Wash, to the east, Castle Street to the south, and the street passing north-westwards to St. Andrew's Church marking the limits in that quarter.

The Norman conquest resulted in most of the county towns receiving a castle as an addition to their defences, or, more probably, to make more certain of their submission to the new *regime.* The castle at HERTFORD was founded in the southern half of the Saxon *burh,* taking up most of the area lying between the river and the ramparts. In the much larger Roman fortified towns, the Norman castle usually occupied an angle of the defences, but the smaller Saxon *burhs,* as at Wallingford, were usually almost completely occupied by the castle works.

The Normans did not actually employ the Saxon ramparts (as these would be too long to be economically palisaded, to say nothing of the impossibility of manning them with the small garrisons the Normans usually employed in such castles) and preferred to raise their own, inside the Saxon lines.

The lines of the approximately rectangular "bailey" at Hertford enclose about three-quarters of the north-eastern part of the southern half of the *burh,* the remaining quarter serving as a useful " barbican bailey'' for the protection of the foot of the timber entrance bridge leading to the main bailey, at the extreme north-eastern corner of which was the lofty " motte." The motte and the bailey ramparts would both have been raised from deep-dug ditches surrounding them on their outer sides. Ramparts and motte-top would have been palisaded, and timber bridges would have given access to their interiors.

The completed castle was given into the charge of the Norman Sheriff of Hertfordshire, Peter de Valence. Little is known of its history until over a century later, when the timber castle must have deteriorated to such an extent as to be in need of repairs.

In 1170, the whole castle was taken in hand and reconstructed. The palisades were replaced with stone walls, and the houses within the castle were also con-

siderably repaired or perhaps rebuilt. The timber hall, which remained until the beginning of the seventeenth century, was probably built at this date. It was doubly aisled in three bays, and was entirely constructed of wood.

The work took four years, and in 1174 the new castle was ready for a garrison of ten " knights " (that is to say, fully armed cavalrymen) and twice as many " servants " or footsoldiers, an unusually large garrison for this period.

In 1216, the castle underwent a serious siege by the rebel baronial armies assisted by a French force under Louis the Dauphin, who had brought with him seven large engines for hurling stones over the defences, which were too low to be of any protection to the garrison. After a month's siege, the castle was forced to surrender, and the besiegers passed on to reduce Berkhampstead by the same methods.

The masonry works of 1170-4 probably included the provision of a new stone gatehouse, and this must have been a target particularly sought out by the French engineers. It may be for this reason that we find a note of repairs to the castle gate having been effected in 1225, and in the same year, the timber house of Faulkes de Breaute was brought from Little Berkhampstead to Hertford Castle, probably to replace one of its houses too badly damaged in the siege to be repaired. The following year another building was similarly transferred from Little Berkhampstead to Hertford.

In the years 1300-2, the castle once again underwent considerable repairs. The structures mentioned are the hall, chamber, wardrobe, kitchen and pantry. Also repaired were the main walls, the bridges across the ditches, the outer gates, and the chamber over the gate.

In 1327, work was done on the great hall, the great chamber, and two chapels which adjoined it. Mention is made of the two " chimnies " (fireplaces) of the great hall, and two " garderobes." Some indication is given of the form of the defences at this period, as the great

gatehouse of the bailey had a barbican gatehouse at the outer end of its bridge, whereas the barbican bailey was still only protected by palisaded ramparts, but had a stone gatehouse, probably facing the lane known as Pegs Lane.

The general aspect of the castle at this period, that of the heyday of great castles, was probably as follows. The inner bailey would have been surrounded by stone walls, approached through a gatehouse having before it a timber bridge crossing the ditch (probably half-filled with water from the river) with a small gatehouse as the bridge-foot. Beyond the bridge would be the small barbican bailey, surrounded by palisaded ramparts, through which a stone gatehouse gave access to another bridge leading to Castle Street.

Within the main bailey would be the castle buildings, almost entirely constructed of timber, and arranged round a courtyard. On the side of this quadrangle opposite to the gatehouse would be the great hall surmounted by a louvre turret. In the far corner of the bailey would be the lofty motte, surrounded by its ditch, and crowned by a strong stone wall.

The castle has little architectural history during the next two hundred years, and the accession of Henry VIII found it decayed and fast falling to ruin. The castle, however, was still a royal stronghold, and some attempt was made at the time to improve its appearance. The present brick gatehouse was built on the site of the earlier structure, and a large semicircular bastion was added to the eastern angle of the bailey defences, overlooking the town.

In 1582, plague in London drove the Courts to seek provincial accommodation, and the buildings within Hertford Castle were adapted to serve the purpose of a Parliament House. Ten years later the same migration took place.

On the accession of James I, the castle was sold by that economically-minded monarch to one Thomas Mewtys, who pulled the buildings down for their materials. The gatehouse, however, being a substantial structure and suitable for habitation, was retained,

and this, with a few portions of the bailey walls and the remains of an angle tower, is all that remains of the royal castle of Hertford.

* * * *

In the November of 1066, the Conqueror's advance on London had been completely held up by his failure to force the passage of the Thames at London Bridge. He therefore turned away westwards along the right bank as far as Wallingford, where he crossed the river, advancing thence along the Icknield Way north-eastwards so as to cut off London from possible reinforcement from the North. He was engaged on this flanking march, building small castles in the gaps of the Chilterns to consolidate his line, when the Londoners decided to surrender.

The chief men of the city set out to meet him along the Akeman Street, which passes by Watford to cross the Chilterns by the pass at BERKHAMPSTEAD, and it was at this place that William waited to receive the surrender. The last occasion upon which he had encountered the Saxon government was at the battle of Hastings, and he would hardly have waited for this new meeting, even though no hostility was apparently intended, without taking some steps towards protecting himself and his army.

There seems little doubt that it was for the purpose of receiving the surrender of the Saxon government that William had the castle of Berkhampstead erected. He probably turned his whole army on to the work of digging the ditches and raising ramparts and *motte,* and many of the local Saxon peasantry must have been pressed into the work, which could have been completed in a week or so.

Evidence of the haste in setting out is shown by the irregular oval shape of the bailey, quite unlike William's usual rectangular plan. At the north-east side of the oval is the great motte, beside which, beneath its protecting mass, was the original entrance.

The surrender effected, William passed on to his coronation in London, and the castle was eventually handed over to his half-brother, Robert, count of Mortain, who probably completed the structure with

its palisades, and perhaps a timber hall and a house for the Constable. From the time of its foundation, Berkhampstead Castle remained as one of the royal fortresses, usually leased to some important official, such as the Chancellor.

In 1155, Thomas a Becket was holding it, and it was probably he who began to reconstruct the castle in stone. From this year until 1186, work was in progress, and the stone walls now remaining round bailey and motte-top were probably the first structures erected.

The thirteenth century saw the introduction of the water-filled ditch as a feature of castle architecture, and at Berkhampstead some attempt seems to have been made to utilise the little river Bulbourne for the purpose. An outer rampart was raised from an external ditch to form a bund at the lip of the main counterscarp to keep the water in, and this outer rampart was being supplied with a palisade in 1215.

In the December of the following year the siege train of Louis the Dauphin, having reduced the castle of Hertford, came before Berkhampstead Castle to repeat the process there. A siege-work was constructed along the north-eastern side of the castle, consisting of a rampart having emplacements for the seven great catapults which formed Louis's artillery. These remain to-day, and the continuous bombardment from the engines which were mounted on them forced the garrison to surrender after a fortnight's siege.

Some time about this period, probably before the siege, the bailey had been provided with a new entrance on the south having a stone gatehouse protecting it. The military aspect of the castle, however, seems to have been neglected thenceforth, and it is noticeable that no attempt appears to have been made to raise the walls which had proved useless against Louis's siege engines and were obviously by then obsolete. Instead of receiving the lofty curtain walls necessary in the thirteenth century for protection against high-trajectory *trebuchets,* whatever was done to the castle during this century seems to have been confined to its domestic buildings.

One of its improvers was Richard, Earl of Cornwall, second son of King John, who built a tower of three stories, probably that on the western side of the bailey, in 1254. It seems probable that the interior accommodation of the castle was considerably improved during the century, as a number of fine buildings are mentioned as existing during this period. By 1336, however, the glories of the castle had faded considerably, and the place had become much in need of repair. In 1361 it was being used as a prison for King John of France, taken prisoner at Poitiers five years earlier.

Although still a royal fortress, the fortunes of Berkhampstead Castle declined more and more, until in 1580 it was leased by Elizabeth to Sir Edward Carey, who abandoned it as a residence and built Berkhampstead Place nearby, probably using a good deal of the castle material for the purpose.

The castle is now in the care of His Majesty's Commissioners of Works, who have repaired its walls and what scanty fragments remain of its one-time royal residences.

. . . .

The ancient route known as Stone Street, sweeping westwards from Colchester across Essex and Hertfordshire to meet the Icknield Way at Baldock, crosses the Stort a little to the north of BISHOPS STORTFORD.

• At the Norman Conquest, it was William's policy to build castles in most of the larger towns, especially if they should stand at strategic points, such as, for instance, where an important route was barred by a river crossing.

It is therefore not surprising that Stortford received its castle very soon after the Conquest. The founder was probably William, Bishop of London, one of the Norman favourites of Edward the Confessor, who acquired the manor of Stortford at the Conquest and doubtless constructed the castle soon after.

The greater castles built by William and his chief adherents fall into two types, those actually founded by himself, and those erected by his chief men, not

so much as residences for themselves as to assist their overlord in his task of policing the country

The first type usually has a rectangular bailey, as the most convenient shape for containing hutments for soldiers and their horses. The difficulty of constructing a square angle in earthwork, however, due to the fact that there is three times more earth taken from the ditch at this point than can be absorbed by the rampart, usually led the lesser castle-builders to adopt circular plans.

The bailey at Stortford was set out as a circle of about two hundred feet radius, and the circumference of the motte ditch was struck from a point on the northern side of the bailey setting-out line. This motte was subsequently extended northwards to increase the accommodation of the summit, upon which masonry structures were eventually erected.

This motte-enlargement is a rare feature in this country, and the Stortford example may be compared with the motte of Geoffrey de Mandeville's great castle of Pleshey in Essex. The assortment of masonry structures which crowns the former motte, however, makes it unique.

The position of Stortford Castle on the Essex-Herts border, standing as it did in the midst of the great baronial estates with their castles, made it an object of annoyance to the owners of these. In 1137, at the commencement of the Anarchy, Abbot Anselm of Bury St. Edmunds succeeding in seizing it, claiming as his title that he had been elected to the Bishopric of London. He does not appear, however, to have retained it for long.

Stortford Castle was particularly irritating to Geoffrey de Mandeville, as it was by way of cutting his communications between the Tower of London, of which he was Constable, and his vast Essex and Herts estates, as well as being on the main route between the two latter.

In 1141, this troublesome Earl of Essex even went so far as to kidnap the Bishop of London, in an attempt to make him give up the episcopal stronghold which was such a thorn in the side of the ambitious

Earl, who does not, however, appear to have been able to attain his desire in this respect.

Stephen and the Empress both held out Stortford Castle as the bait for Geoffrey's support, but the bishop continued to hold the place despite their promises.

The castle was one of those singled out by King John for his displeasure, and it is even recorded that it was dismantled by his orders in 1211. Two years later, however, John gave leave for the castle to be rebuilt, so it seems possible that, as was the case with so many other castles, the orders which John gave for its destruction were never conscientiously carried out, as the king was known to be continually changing his mind over such matters.

From this time onward, the castle seems never to have been taken seriously either as fortress or residence, and it seems possible that the masonry on the motte-top was all that the place ever possessed.

Orders were given for its re-crenellation in 1345-8, but there is no evidence for what was done at this time. The castle seems to have had no history, and probably continued in a state of neglect. By 1549 it was a complete ruin, and exactly a century later what remained was practically all pulled down for the sake of the materials.

Stortford Castle, always more of a fortress than a residence, could have possessed few attractions as an episcopal habitation, and through much of its existence must have been but a troublesome anachronism, suited only to use as a prison for offenders against the bishop's peace.

The bailey has now almost vanished, but its lines may be traced in the straightened-out courses of the ditches which drain the marshes of the Stort. The appearance of the lower part of the motte suggests that its ditch was at one time considerably widened to make it a waterholding moat. If this supposition is correct, the alteration may date from the mid-fourteenth century re-crenellation.

A jumble of shattered masonry crowns the summit of this fine earthwork, but there are few features of either plan or detail which appear to be of any assist-

ance towards the elucidation of the purpose of this unique structure.

Stortford Castle is very much a stronghold of other days.

The three castles described above belong to that type of fortress designed more for the purpose of housing a garrison than to provide a residence for a Norman lord. At Anstey, however, we can see the remains of an example of the latter type, its defences designed to protect a dwelling rather than to enclose the huts of a garrison.

Anstey was possibly founded by that great castle-builder, Eustace of Boulogne, to whom are due the great Essex motte-castles of Ongar and Pleshey. Anstey, however, is quite differently planned from these, as it has no true motte, the existing lofty mound, thirty-five feet in height, having been raised from the broad low artificial plateau which was so frequently provided by the Norman builders to be a site for a residential castle.

The mound at Anstey was of " squaroid " form, its sides bowed and its angles well rounded to further assist the sweep of the stockades surrounding its rim, within which the timber house was to stand.

The entrance was on the north-east side, and the foot of the timber entrance bridge was protected by a small barbican bailey.

In 1141, the castle was given by King Stephen to Geoffrey de Mandeville, who may have found the castle already there or may have built it himself. The former is most probable, as castles were the baits held out by both parties to attract the support of the formidable Earl of Essex, who doubtless employed Anstey Castle as a base for his disgraceful depredations in the district which he harried until his timely death in 1144.

The troublous times of John's reign were often an excuse for the holders of baronial castles to improve their defences.

Either at this time, or at the end of the preceding century, Anstey Castle was considerably improved by the deepening of the ditches, the earth being used for

Norman lord. At ANSTEY, however, we can see the remains of an example of the latter type, its defences waternholding moats thus created were extended round the barbican bailey as well as the mound, the earth from the ditches of the former being used as a bund along the counterscarp.

The raising of the mound had made the ascent to its summit so steep that a considerable modification of the entrance arrangements became necessary.

A small mound was provided at the southern angle of the little bailey, to serve as a sort of stepping-stone at the angle of a new bridge which rose from the bailey south-westwards to the top of this little mound and then turned north-westwards to rise to the summit of the great mound itself. The small barbican bailey was eventually extended southwards to include the small mound, beside which was apparently the entrance to the castle.

There are no signs to-day of any masonry belonging to the castle, although a few foundations have been discovered on the mound-top. There is record of the one-time existence of a " great gatehouse " to the castle.

The alterations to Anstey Castle made during the troubles of John's reign appear to have met with the disapproval of his son, Henry III, as that monarch, in 1218, ordered that such works as had been effected during that time were to be dismantled. It seems probable, however, that no notice was taken of these commands, as in 1225 the castle was seized by the king.

It may have been dismantled forthwith. At any rate, it seems to have had no further history, and by 1314 had ceased to exist.

There is some indication that the village was at one time fortified with earthwork, and evidence of its one-time importance is displayed by the large cruciform church which, nestling under the lofty, tree-embowered castle mound, remains to-day as its sole .memorial.

In the very centre of Hertfordshire stands the ruined home of its one-time sheriff, Peter de Valence, who received BENINGTON at the Conquest and probably

founded the castle very soon after, thus providing the barony of Valence with a fitting *caput.*

The plan of the castle is very simple, being merely the usual " squaroid " mound with a barbican bailey of ample proportions to the north-east. At the southern angle of the bailey, protected by the palisaded summit of the mound, was the entrance to the castle.

The defences of this entrance were further improved during the second quarter of the twelfth century by the erection, on the mound above, of a square keep-tower of masonry, some forty feet square externally, the walls about eight feet thick and each angle ornamented with small pilaster strips, one also passing up the centre of each face.

This tower must have resembled the well-known keep at Guildford and several similar structures which remain throughout the country, but Benington keep, the only one in Hertfordshire, is now very badly ruined, a part of the lower storey only, from which all the ashlar facing has been stripped, remaining to provide some indication as to its original form.

The appearance of the keep to-day may perhaps be due to its demolition in the reign of Henry II, that energetic destroyer of superfluous private strongholds.

At any rate, it is known that Roger de Valence, son of the founder of the castle, threw in his lot with Geoffrey de Mandeville, dying however in 1141, three years before the earl. It may have been due to the bad reputation of the castellans of Benington during the Anarchy that the order for the demolition of its keep was given in 1177. It is known that the order was carried out, as the accounts for the purchase of picks for the work is in existence.

Benington Castle eventually came into the possession of the Benstedes. an important family in mediaeval Hertfordshire, who made the castle their chief seat.

Despite their long residence, however, they do not seem to have added anything to the castle's architectural history. Thus the half-demolished keep was neither rebuilt nor removed, and it indeed appears that the structure may be to-day much as it was left by the engineers of Henry II.

We have now dealt with the chief castles of the shire, the remainder being those which are of simple types and common to the whole country.

There were many castles built in the years following the Conquest which were nothing more than fortified country houses or even farmhouses, built either to protect the residence from potentially hostile Saxon tenantry or else as a defence against the bands of ruffians which infested the country during the unhappy reign of Stephen.

The castle at PIRTON may owe its foundation to the latter contingency. The manor formed part of the barony of Ulverly in Warwickshire, belonging to the family of De Limesi, and as an outlying fief may quite well have needed a castle for its protection.

Pirton Castle really belongs to the large group of such structures which covers the fertile valley of the Ouse, and should in fact be considered as a Bedfordshire rather than a Hertfordshire castle. An outlying member of that group, exposed to the depredations of the voracious eastern barons, it would appear to have been originally quite a formidable little stronghold.

There are several villages in Hertfordshire which show signs of having been fortified at some early date, probably at the period of the Danish raids. Pirton was one such " *burh*"and the enclosure apparently formed a large rectangle lying north-west and south-east, three or four furlongs in length and half as wide.

At the south-east end was the manorial enclosure, containing the manor-house and the church, and it was within this area that the castle was erected. The mound is oval, about twenty feet high, and has a strong rampart round its summit. It was raised in the southern angle of the village fortifications, and a small enclosure was formed between it and the south-eastern rampart of the latter to serve as a barbican bailey.

The large cruciform twelfth-century church, now shorn of its transepts, stood close to the north-east of the mound, and a large bailey seems to have been subsequently constructed on this side to enclose it. This large bailey may also have enclosed the conglomeration of buildings forming the manorial estab-

lishment, for the accommodation of which the summit of the mound would have been too small.

Pirton seems to have had no history, and probably had but a short existence as a castle-town, its one-time importance demonstrated, however, by the remains of the fine church and the deserted castle-mound. The very existence of the castle is forgotten to-day, and the mound is known as the " Toot Hill," which simply means a look-out place.

* * * *

An even more derelict castle is that of WALKERN, its earthworks hidden away in a farmyard a mile to the east of the village. The legend of a castle, however, has continued to cling to the spot, albeit there is little enough to show of its one-time strength.

Walkern in the twelfth century was the head of the rather insignificant Hertfordshire barony of the St. Clares, having been given to Hamo de St. Clare, in return for his loyalty, by King Stephen. The castle was almost certainly founded at this time. Unlike that at Pirton, which is clearly the " great house " of the village, Walkern Castle was probably built in its isolated position more for the purpose of serving as a base for the depredations which were the order of the day.

At any rate, it is known that Hamo de St. Clare was a supporter of the ubiquitous Geoffrey de Mandeville, so the former baron is not likely to have been very much of a benefactor to the countryside.

Walkern Castle consists of a fair-sized oval bailey, suitable for accommodating a garrison of ruffians. At the northern end is the remains of a mound, which may or may not have been a conical *motte,* but is now too reduced in size to be properly appreciated.

Hamo probably did not survive Stephen's reign, for he was succeeded in the barony by Hubert de St. Clare, who died in the first year of Henry II. Whether Hubert was as troublesome as his predecessor may be assumed to have been is unknown, but it seems very probable that Walkern Castle was one of those slighted by Henry II soon after his accession.

The present half-levelled appearance of the mound

is probably the result of some such operation, as the partial destruction of the mound of a castle was the usual method of slighting.

If the supposition as to the origin of Walkern Castle is correct, we may be sure that its demise could have occasioned no mourning about the Hertfordshire countryside.

Let us now return from the hunting grounds of the dreaded Earl of Essex to the more favoured lands of the north-west, where, still protecting its pleasant little village, rises the sturdy *motte* of GREAT WYMONDLEY.

Wymondley was the head of the barony of d'Argentan, having been given to Reginald d'Argentan at the Conquest and continuing in the hands of his son John into the period of the Anarchy. Stephen confirmed John in his possession of the place, and it may have been this owner who raised the little castle as a protection against the marauders from the east.

The village may have already been fortified before the castle was built. The ramparts surrounding the rectangular enclosure are clearly visible.

It is noticeable that Wymondley Castle, although head of a barony, was not of the residential type, being a small but strong motte-and-bailey of very business-like appearance. The circular bailey is attached to the north-east side of the motte, and the whole structure lies in the western angle of the rectangular enclosure referred to above.

The castle has no recorded history, but may well have continued as a loyal stronghold throughout the twelfth century, as one of its owners, Reginald d'Argentan, was Sherff of Hertfordshire in 1196.

The history of Hertfordshire castrametation is inseparably bound up with the story of the exploits of that great evil influence of the twelfth century; Geoffrey de Mandeville. Ambitious and utterly unscrupulous, this powerful Earl of Essex was feared and hated by both sides during the civil war of Stephen's reign.

Both King and Empress gave him bribes to enlist his support. He took all and invariably betrayed the donor.

In the September of 1143, Stephen summoned the; Earl to a conference at St. Albans. Geoffrey, fearless in his arrogance, attended the summons and behaved so insufferably that the King lost his temper and ordered the Earl's immediate arrest.

Geoffrey was seized and held prisoner until he had given up the Tower of London, of which he was Constable, and his ancestral castles of Pleshey and Saffron Walden.

The fury of the thwarted Earl appears to have turned his head, and he became absolutely berserk. With an ever-increasing band of ruffians he fled to the Fens and seized and fortified Ramsey Abbey. For nearly a year he ravaged the shires of Huntingdon, Cambridge and Hertford, until he was mercifully slain at the siege of the royal castle of Burwell.

As he was still in possession of Anstey Castle, and being moreover abetted by the owners of the castles of Walkern and Benington, it seems almost certain that he must have seized the village of THERFIELD in north Hertfordshire, the property of the great abbey which had become his headquarters.

His operations began about Christmas in 1143, and to that period is probably due the foundation of the castle in its fortified village.

The death of the Earl and the collapse of his rebellion in the September of the following year probably saw the villagers of Therfield released from their servitude, and they no doubt worked with a will to remove as much as possible of the visible memorials of their terrible year.

Thus there is little to be seen to-day of the castle, although the earthworks of the mound and several enclosures may still be traced to the north-west of the church.

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The last of our twelfth-century castles is the curious little motte-and-bailey called PERIWINKLE HILL, which lies half a mile to the east of the village of Reed.

To form some opinion as to the probable origin of this little castle, which is obviously a temporary work constructed during some campaign, we must continue to study the operations against Geoffrey de Mandeville during the summer of 1144.

From his robbers' lair at Ramsey Abbey, the Earl had two main lines from which to conduct his raids. One of these was eastwards into Essex and Suffolk, where he had powerful relations among the local barons, similarly inclined to oppress their territories.

The other was into Hertfordshire, where his stronghold of Anstey could form a base, the neighbouring barons to the southwards being at least content to remain neutral.

These two lines were separated by the king's town of Cambridge with its strong castle, the garrison of which might have cut either route if they pleased. Geoffrey stormed the place and sacked it, thereafter doing as he pleased in the district.

In the late summer of 1144, Stephen decided that he would have to take action. He chose to attack the Earl on his line of communication with the too-sympathetic eastern barons, building at Burwell in Cambridgeshire a siege castle to serve as a base from, which to attack Fordham Castle, recently built by the rebels as an advanced post.

It was Geoffrey's subsequent assault on Burwell Castle which brought about his death, the heat of a summer's day proving so oppressive that the Earl, removing his helm for coolness, was shot in the head by a royal crossbowman, dying soon after.

It seems very probable that Stephen, having stopped the line of the Earl's eastern raids by building Burwell Castle, would probably also wish to found a post which might obstruct his southern route into Hertfordshire.

It is therefore very noticeable that the little motte-and-bailey castle at Periwinkle Hill is exactly halfway between Anstey Castle and Therfield Castle, also, it has been suggested, a stronghold of the Earl's.

It may therefore be suggested that Periwinkle Hill is a siege castle built by King Stephen in the summer of 1144 to keep watch on these two castles until the

eastern route had been stopped and he could turn his attention to the southern.

Periwinkle Hill may never have been finished, or it may have been subsequently dismantled after it had become unnecessary, but the former is most probable, as there is no sign of slighting.

In the extreme north of the shire, at the edge of the lonely Icknield heaths, stands the hill-top village of BYGRAVE.

Its isolated position was probably the reason for its being fortified at an early period. Almost astride the great thoroughfare of the Icknield Way, Bygrave must have been very exposed to raids by Danish bands, and it may have been for fear of these that the village was enclosed. The defences may, however, date from the period of the Anarchy, when the manor belonged to the Bishops of Chester, or possibly may have been extended at that time.

The total enclosure discernible to-day is only about a dozen acres in extent, with the manorial area and the little twelfth-century church at its centre. There was, however, no contemporary castle, as at Pirton and Wymondley, and as a result the village never became an important twelfth-century centre, as is demonstrated by the small scale of its church compared with those of such castle-towns as Pirton or Anstey.

In the thirteenth century, Bygrave came into the possession of the important Bedfordshire family of Somery, who tried to raise the status of the village, as a rival to Baldock, by obtaining in 1256 a charter for a weekly market.

Whether or not this project was successful is not known, but the manor house itself seems to have been a residence of some importance, as Edward I stayed there in 1299 and again in 1302, on his way to St. Albans Abbey.

The agrarian troubles in the middle of the fourteenth century may have brought about a decline in the fortunes of the place. Possibly the Black Death depopulated it, for the little church seems to indicate that it never served a market-town worthy of the title.

In 1383, the manor passed out of the possession of the Someries into that of Sir John Thornbury, who in the same year obtained from the king a licence to fortify his house there. The large moat of this castle still remains to the south-west of the church. It is complete except for its northern side, and probably surrounded a castle similar in appearance to that of Wingfield in Suffolk, licensed in the previous year by the de la Poles.

Bodiam Castle in Sussex was also licensed in 1383, but this was built for coastal defence against possible French invasion, and is a more formidable structure than Bygrave Castle is likely to have been.

No traces remain of the castle, and it appears to have had no history. The village had declined by 1428 until there were only seven inhabitants, who may have all been connected with the house itself. In 1435, Sir Philip Thornbury tried once again to make Bygrave a market-town, and the village street which leads north-westwards from the little church and the site of the castle gate probably dates from this period of attempted revival.

But the street never grew to be a town, and the tiny village of Bygrave sleeps on its lonely hill-top above the Icknield Way.

Something of the story of the once great castle of MORE was told in the 1936 issue of these Transactions.

Founded in 1426, fourteen years before its Sussex cousin, Hurstmonceux Castle, More was the first castle in this country to be built of brick. It was much the same size as the beautiful Sussex castle which is one of the architectural treasures of this country, and the scanty remains of the Hertfordshire building suggest that there may have been a considerable resemblance between the two.

Soon after 1516, when Thomas Wolsey became possessed of the castle, More was greatly enlarged and embellished by the great cardinal, becoming more of a palace than a fortress. Henry VIII and his court were often entertained there, and within its walls, in 1525, was signed the Treaty of the More.

The glories of More began to fade at the death of Wolsey, and, although the Privy Council met there several times in 1542, the great palace fell rapidly into disrepair and ruin. It was finally pulled down about 1673 by the ill-fated Duke of Monmouth, the materials being used to build the predecessor of the present fine house of Moor Park.

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Hertfordshire is hardly a shire which will present to the student of mediaeval military architecture a complete review of the subject. The first-class castles of the Conquest have hardly survived, except for the sorry shell of Berkhampstead. The two baronial castles of Anstey and Benington survive but as earthworks, with a few scanty fragments remaining at the latter place of Hertfordshire's only keep tower. There are no thirteenth-century castles in the shire, and nothing of Edwardian date remains anywhere for study. The only two examples of the later, fortified manor-house, type of castle have utterly vanished.

The interest lies in the remains of the humble little earth-and-timber castles of the twelfth century, examples of a type of structure with which the land was once covered.

These are indeed relics of the heyday of the private castle: the days when Geoffrey de Mandeville and his kind swept with their bands of ruffians through the pleasant Hertfordshire countryside — the days of the Great Anarchy, of which the chronicler was forced to write: "... they filled the land full of castles . . . and God and His Saints slept."