

EXTRACT FROM ENGLISH HERITAGE'S RECORD OF SCHEDULED MONUMENTS

MONUMENT: Motte and bailey castle and associated earthworks 100m south of Tuthill Farm

PARISH: THERFIELD

DISTRICT: NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE

COUNTY: HERTFORDSHIRE

NATIONAL MONUMENT NO: 20672

NATIONAL GRID REFERENCE(S): TL33333715

DESCRIPTION OF THE MONUMENT

Tuthill motte and bailey castle is situated 50m north-west of St Mary's Church in Therfield. The monument includes a small motte, 14m in diameter at its base, 8m in diameter at its top and c.1.5m in height. The motte is surrounded by a ditch which has a maximum width of 5m and is 1m deep. The bailey which is situated to the south of the motte, is defined by a ditch and slight bank which survives as earthworks to the south and south-west. The bank measures 2.5m in width and c.0.4m in height whilst the ditch varies between 5m and 7m in width and has a maximum depth of 1m. These earthworks appear to continue westwards into the graveyard. Additional amorphous earthworks are visible north of the motte and are considered to be continuations of the castle defences. Directly south of the motte, within the area of the bailey, is a waterfilled fishpond, which measures 68m east-west by 10m north-south and may be contemporary with the rest of the monument.

Excavations carried out in 1958 by M.Biddle confirmed the site as a mid 12th century motte and bailey with a probable contemporary village enclosure.

Evidence from the northern part of the bailey showed that the enclosure was palisaded. The castle fell into disuse early in the 13th century. However, in the area covered by the 12th century castle, an earlier Saxo-Norman occupation layer was found. This phase of occupation can be dated by pottery from 1050 to 1100. The site was then abandoned until the castle was built.

The tennis courts and fences are all excluded from the scheduling although the ground beneath them is included.

ASSESSMENT OF IMPORTANCE

Motte and bailey castles are medieval fortifications introduced into Britain by the Normans. They comprised a large conical mound of earth or rubble, the motte, surmounted by a palisade and a stone or timber tower. In a majority of examples an embanked enclosure containing additional buildings, the bailey, adjoined the motte. Motte castles and motte-and-bailey castles acted as garrison forts during offensive military operations, as strongholds, and, in many cases, as aristocratic residences and as centres of local or royal administration. Built in towns, villages and open countryside, motte and bailey castles generally occupied strategic positions dominating their immediate locality and, as a result, are the most visually impressive monuments of the early post-Conquest period surviving in the modern landscape.

Over 600 motte castles or motte-and-bailey castles are recorded nationally, with examples known from most regions. As one of a restricted range of recognised early post-Conquest monuments, they are particularly important for the study of Norman Britain and the development of the feudal system. Although many were occupied for only a short period of time, motte castles continued to be built and occupied from the 11th to the 13th centuries, after which they were superseded by other types of castle.

Despite some levelling, Tuthill motte and bailey castle is comparatively well-preserved and is unusual in that it has produced evidence for earlier occupation. Limited excavations have increased knowledge about the site and confirmed the survival of further remains containing important archaeological and environmental evidence. Archaeological remains will survive throughout the site but may be particularly significant in the areas of the bailey and village enclosure where evidence for the length and nature of occupation may survive. Environmental evidence will survive largely in the fills of the ditch and fishpond and may provide evidence for the economy of the site's inhabitants and the landscape in which they lived.

MONUMENT INCLUDED IN THE SCHEDULE ON 18th September 1992