

EXTRACT FROM ENGLISH HERITAGE'S RECORD OF SCHEDULED MONUMENTS

MONUMENT: Castle Hill motte and bailey castle

PARISH: TONG

DISTRICT: BRIDGNORTH

COUNTY: SHROPSHIRE

NATIONAL MONUMENT NO: 33805

NATIONAL GRID REFERENCE(S): SJ79430798

DESCRIPTION OF THE MONUMENT

The monument includes the earthwork and buried remains of a motte and bailey castle known as Castle Hill, in the hamlet of Tong Norton. The castle is probably that mentioned in a charter dated 1185-90, although it is unclear whether an earlier documentary reference to a castle at Tong in 1098 relates to this site or to the castle 1.1km to the south west (mostly destroyed by the construction of the M54). It is probable that land referred to as 'Olde Castle' in a document dated 1320 is the castle at Tong Norton, indicating that the castle may have been abandoned by that time.

The motte has been formed from a natural steep-sided, flat-topped knoll of red sandstone beside the River Wolfe, which is surrounded by gently undulating land. This kidney-shaped mound measures approximately 40m by 55m at its base, 28m by 33m (maximum dimensions) across the top and is between 5m and 2.5m high. The sides of the knoll may have been artificially enhanced to increase its defensiveness. To the south of the mound lies a triangular shaped bailey, measuring 40m by 65m internally (maximum dimensions). It is defined on its eastern side by a well-defined scarp, up to 0.8m high, created by cutting into the natural slope. On its western side it is defined by a natural slope, possibly artificially enhanced, that falls towards the River Wolfe. All fence posts are 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.

Castle Hill motte and bailey castle at Tong Norton is a well-preserved example of this class of monument. Extensive remains of the structures that stood on the motte and within the bailey are expected to survive, which together with the associated artefacts and organic remains, will provide valuable evidence about the activities and lifestyle of the site's inhabitants. Documentary references provide valuable information about the length of its occupation, believed to be some 200 years, in relation to the nearby castle to the south west.

The monument remains a prominent feature within the landscape.

SCHEDULING HISTORY

Monument included in the Schedule on 9th November 1972 as:

COUNTY/NUMBER: Shropshire 297

NAME: Castle Mound

The reference of this monument is now:

NATIONAL MONUMENT NUMBER: 33805

NAME: Castle Hill motte and bailey castle

SCHEDULING AFFIRMED ON 07th June 2000