

EXTRACT FROM ENGLISH HERITAGE'S RECORD OF SCHEDULED MONUMENTS

MONUMENT: Ennor Castle, Old Town, St Mary's

PARISH: ST MARY'S

DISTRICT: ISLES OF SCILLY

COUNTY: ISLES OF SCILLY

NATIONAL MONUMENT NO: 15469

NATIONAL GRID REFERENCE(S): SV91411035

DESCRIPTION OF THE MONUMENT

The monument includes a small shell keep castle known as Ennor, or Old Town, Castle in the present village of Old Town on the south coast of St Mary's in the Isles of Scilly.

The castle occupies a small but prominent knoll on the east side of the broad Lower Moors valley behind Old Town Bay. The knoll has a semicircular rocky scarp facing west, up to c.10m above the valley floor, from which the knoll slopes steeply to more gently sloping land to the east. The castle encompassed the knoll with a subrectangular keep wall, now partly dismantled. An outer earthwork bank is visible along the foot of the slope and traces of walling indicate an adjacent enclosure south east of the knoll.

The walls of the sub-rectangular keep no longer survive in their entirety above ground level. The wall survives above ground on the north west and part of the west side, where it is c.1m thick, of coursed rubble. Its footings vary in height with irregularities in the knoll, and the wall's height thus also varies, averaging 1m above interior ground level but reaching 2m high in places. Elsewhere, the line of the wall is now marked by earthwork banks between 2m and 4.5m wide and 1m to 1.5m high along the south west and east sides, and by a wider spread of dense rubble on the south east side.

The keep's walls defined a subrectangular internal area measuring 22m north east-south west by up to 17m north west-south east, rounded at the south west end and squared at the north east. The interior of the castle has only a limited level area behind the south west end, beyond which the surface slopes fairly steeply. Internal buildings, typically of timber within small shell keep castles, have left no visible remains above ground level.

An outer earthwork extends along the foot of the slope north east of the keep. It survives as a slight bank up to 0.25m high.

Also beyond the keep, a short exposure of walling extends from the southern end of the knoll's outcrops, implying an adjacent enclosure south east of the keep. The wall is built of coursed rubble, 0.5m high and is visible over 2m before becoming covered by later deposits. The wall runs along slightly elevated land extending south east from the knoll; this area has been subject to relatively recent gardening and the survival of earlier features is unknown.

Surviving historical sources add to our knowledge of Ennor Castle. The earliest reference to Ennor Castle is in a deed of AD 1244, by which time Ennor (or 'La Val' in Anglo-Norman documents) had been the main settlement on St Mary's for some time. By 1306 Ranulf de Blanchminster held the castle in

return for the provision of 12 men-at-arms to maintain the peace and the payment of an annual tribute to the king of 6s 8d or 300 puffins at Michaelmas, a tribute whose actual payment was always recorded in money. A royal licence to crenellate (ie to defend) the castle was granted to Ranulf in 1315 but in 1337, the castle along with the rest of Scilly, was included in the lands of the newly created Duchy of Cornwall. In c.1540, the King's Antiquary, John Leland, described the castle as 'a meately strong pile'. It still formed an effective fortification, and in May 1554 a survey records that Ennor Castle was armed with cannon.

The fortunes of the castle and its adjacent settlement were finally eclipsed when the fortification of Scilly was revised to serve national defensive considerations in the late 16th century, when the Star Castle was built. At the same time the focus of settlement and trade also moved to St Mary's Pool, leaving Ennor Castle redundant and Ennor's town and harbour in decline. A survey of 1652, refers to the settlement at St Mary's Pool (the present Hughtown) as 'Hue or New Towne', while Ennor was termed 'Old Town'. By local tradition, the castle was dismantled to build the Star Castle, but in view of the distance it is more likely that Ennor Castle was progressively dismantled to provide building stone for more local purposes in Old Town. The modern water storage and header tanks, their pipes and fittings and the pipe-support blocks are excluded from the scheduling but the ground beneath them is included.

ASSESSMENT OF IMPORTANCE

A shell keep castle is a masonry enclosure extending around the top of raised mound which is often, but not always, derived from an earlier fortification; the enclosure is usually rounded but other shapes are known. A shell keep is relatively small, normally between 15m and 25m across, and is seldom more than one storey high. Unless supplemented by excavated evidence, few traces of internal buildings are generally found as they were usually of wood, only rarely being replaced in stone. Shell keeps were built over a period of about 150 years from the end of the 11th century to the mid 13th century; most were built in the 12th century and provided strongly fortified residences for the king or leading families. Shell keep castles are widely dispersed throughout England, with a marked concentration in the Welsh Marches and with a distribution extending into Wales and to a lesser extent into Scotland. They are a rare class of monument, with 71 recorded examples nationally, of which only one is situated in the Isles of Scilly. They display a considerable diversity of form, with no two examples exactly alike. Along with other contemporary forms of castle, they are major medieval monuments which, belonging to the highest levels of society, frequently acted as administrative centres and formed the foci for developing settlements. Consequently they form valuable sources of information on medieval society, its settlement and trading patterns, and on medieval defensive methods.

Ennor Castle survives in recognisable form despite dismantling of much of the keep wall. Sufficient evidence survives to determine the overall ground plan while the interior has not been archaeologically excavated or redeveloped and will retain buried evidence for its internal features. With the broadly contemporary church and quay at Old Town, it forms one of the three major and surviving elements of the main secular settlement on Scilly during the medieval period. Its location relative to the settlement and its historically recorded tenure demonstrate the role and setting of shell keep castles. The sequence of occupation and decline of Ennor Castle also illustrates the interdependence of such castles with their wider settlement context. Its decline shows particularly clearly the impact of change at national level in the 16th century. Ennor Castle is the only medieval castle on the Isles of Scilly. It is also the earliest element in an almost continuous sequence of fortifications on the islands, which extends to the end of World War II and

which is itself nationally very rare in terms of completeness and quality of survival.

SCHEDULING HISTORY

Monument included in the Schedule on 7th October 1976 as:

COUNTY/NUMBER: Cornwall 990

NAME: Remains of Old Town Castle, Old Town

Scheduling amended on 1st April 1994 to:

COUNTY/NUMBER: Isles of Scilly 990

NAME: Remains of Old Town Castle, Old Town

The reference of this monument is now:

NATIONAL MONUMENT NUMBER: 15469

NAME: Ennor Castle, Old Town, St Mary's

SCHEDULING REVISED ON 29th May 1996