

EXTRACT FROM ENGLISH HERITAGE'S RECORD OF SCHEDULED MONUMENTS

MONUMENT: Baginton Castle, associated settlement remains, ponds and mill sites

PARISH: BAGINTON

DISTRICT: WARWICK

COUNTY: WARWICKSHIRE

NATIONAL MONUMENT NO: 21540

NATIONAL GRID REFERENCE(S): SP34197468
SP34237448

DESCRIPTION OF THE MONUMENT

The monument is situated approximately 80m west of St John the Baptist's Church in Baginton and is contained in two separate areas. It includes the standing and buried remains of Baginton Castle and the earthwork remains of an associated medieval settlement. It also includes parts of a water-management system, the earthwork remains of a watermill and a 19th century gazebo. Baginton Castle is situated in a commanding position on the natural escarpment of a plateau running north west-south east above the flood plain of the River Sowe. It is primarily a motte castle which was altered in the late 14th century to form a tower keep castle, the standing remains of which are Listed Grade II and are included in the scheduling. The sloping sides of the plateau form the defences of the motte on its southern and western edges and the eastern defences have been strengthened by the construction of a ditch. The ditch now measures up to 30m wide. The northern and north western edges of the motte have been damaged by quarrying activities and no evidence for the northern defences of the castle is now visible. The quarry has been infilled and is not included in the scheduling. The flat-topped motte now measures 40m north-south and approximately 60m east-west. The eastern edge of the motte has been altered with the construction of the tower keep. There is no surface evidence of structures associated with the motte castle but these will survive as buried features beneath the ground surface, even though the surface of the motte was levelled in the 18th century and in the 19th century the southern part was artificially raised and a gazebo was built at its southern edge. The lower courses of the stone-built gazebo are visible above the ground surface. The motte is considered to have been associated with an adjacent ward area to the east. There is no surface evidence to suggest that the ward area was defined by defensive earthworks although the steeply sloping sides of the plateau form a natural southern boundary to this area. Quarrying activities have destroyed the northern part of this area and the original northern extent of the ward is not known.

In the late 14th century a tower keep, built of ashlar with a rubble core, was added to the earthworks of Baginton Castle by Sir William Bagot, who purchased the castle in 1381. The tower keep has been constructed within the ditch at the eastern edge of the motte and the original line of the ditch has been altered to run around it. A stone retaining bank is visible on the western edge of the motte ditch. An excavation between 1933-48 uncovered the lower storey of the tower keep. The keep has external dimensions of 16m east-west

and 24m north-south and its walls are 1.5m thick. It has been constructed on levelled bedrock. There are the remains of a chimney and a stair turret in the western wall of the keep and a garderobe at the south west corner; its shaft has been built into the thickness of the keep wall. Finds associated with the occupation of the tower keep were removed during the excavation, including more than two thousand heraldic floor tiles, which are considered to have been from the floor of a collapsed upper room, and a large quantity of ex situ masonry. The tower keep was levelled and infilled during the 18th century when the site was owned by the Bromley family.

An excavation in the quarry face to the east of the tower keep between 1960-62 revealed the remains of three substantial buildings which were dated to the 13th and 14th centuries. The structures were situated in the ward area to the east of the tower keep and are considered to have been associated with the occupation of the castle.

The excavation of the quarry face also located the floor of a Saxon sunken hut or Grubenhäus. Pottery associated with the Grubenhäus dates the structure to the sixth century and provides evidence of the early occupation on the site, predating the foundation of Baginton Castle.

The remains of part of an associated medieval settlement are situated on a terrace at the base of the plateau and are approximately 140m south east of the tower keep. The settlement remains include part of a hollow way which runs west-east and is partly bounded by platforms and three small closes. The southern edge of the settlement remains are defined by a slight boundary bank. It is unclear how far the medieval settlement extended eastwards beyond the present field boundary.

Approximately 230m south east of the tower keep at Baginton Castle are the earthwork remains of three dry ponds, their retaining banks and the site of a watermill. These features are contained within the second area. The ponds were formed by damming the small stream within its narrow, steep valley. The dam for the eastern pond measures up to 50m in length and a sample section of the floor of this pond to the east is included in the scheduling. This dam has been partly rebuilt in recent times. Immediately to the north west of the dam for the eastern pond are the lower courses of a brick structure which represents the final phases of a watermill and is included in the scheduling. There is no surface evidence of the wheel-pit which will survive as a buried feature beneath the ground surface. The dam for the central pond measures 45m in length and the dam for the western pond is 40m long and of crescentic plan. There is a small claypit to the south of the retaining bank for the central pond which is considered to have provided the earth for the construction of the dams. This feature is included in the scheduling. The ponds are mapped on the 1841 tithe map of the area. The siting of the ponds and the watermill, close to Baginton Castle and its associated settlement clearly suggests that these are the remains of the manorial mills of the manor of Baginton.

After the death of Sir William Bagot in 1407 Baginton Castle passed to his daughter, who died without issue. In 1417 the castle was purchased by Richard Beauchamp, Earl of Warwick, and it remained the property of the Beauchamps until 1471 when it was presented to the Dean and Chapter of St Mary's Collegiate Church in Warwick. In 1539 the President of the College refused Thomas Cromwell's offer to purchase the estate as it was their only source of timber and also included a stone quarry. By 1545 Baginton Castle was owned by Francis Goodere. Leland visited the site between 1536-45 and described the castle as desolate. In 1618 the estate was purchased from the Goodere family by William Bromley and by 1630 Baginton Castle was in ruins.

The modern storage building at the north eastern corner of the site, the oval earthworks, 40m south of the tower keep, which form part of the remains of a World War II tank testing course to the south of Baginton Castle, and all fence posts are excluded from the scheduling, although the ground beneath these features is included.

ASSESSMENT OF IMPORTANCE

A tower keep castle is a strongly fortified residence in which the keep is the principal defensive feature. The keep may be free-standing or surrounded by a defensive enclosure; they are normally square in shape, although other shapes are known. Internally they have several floors providing accommodation of various types. If the keep has an attached enclosure this will normally be defined by a defensive wall, frequently with an external ditch. Access into the enclosure was provided by a bridge across the ditch, allowing entry via a gatehouse. Additional buildings, including stabling for animals and workshops, may be found within the enclosure. Tower keep castles were built throughout the medieval period, from immediately after the Norman Conquest to the mid-15th century, with a peak in the middle of the 12th century. A few were constructed on the sites of earlier earthwork castle types but most were new creations. They provided strongly fortified residences for the king or leading families and occur in both urban or rural situations. Tower keep castles are widely dispersed throughout England with a major concentration on the Welsh border. They are rare nationally with only 104 recorded examples. Considerable diversity of form is exhibited with no two examples being exactly alike. With other castle types, they are major medieval monument types which, belonging to the highest levels of society, frequently acted as major administrative centres and formed the foci for developing settlement patterns. Castles generally provide an emotive and evocative link to the past and can provide a valuable educational resource, both with respect to medieval warfare and defence, and to wider aspects of medieval society. All examples retaining significant remains of medieval date are considered to be nationally important.

The castle at Baginton survives well and is largely unencumbered by modern development. The associated medieval settlement remains also survive well and will contain evidence of building plots and field and property boundaries, allowing an interpretation of layout, function and date of the settlement. Partial excavation within Baginton Castle, itself, has revealed artefacts and structural remains dating from the 14th century onwards and evidence of further medieval buildings and associated artefacts will survive in the unexcavated parts. Excavation along the northern and eastern boundary of the monument has indicated the presence of structures beneath the ground surface in the north eastern part of the site which will retain evidence for the economy and occupation of the site both prior to and following the construction of Baginton Castle. Only a small proportion of the whole of the monument has been excavated and deposits survive undisturbed. The ponds and watermill sites to the south east of Baginton Castle also survive in a good condition and are considered to be important because of their association with Baginton Castle and its associated settlement. They will retain valuable information regarding the internal economy of both castle and settlement through an extended period of time. Baginton Castle is an unusual example of a motte castle that has been converted to a tower keep. Both this, and its association with the settlement remains, the ponds and the watermill site make it important for the study of Norman Britain and for the development of the feudal system through the Middle Ages.

SCHEDULING HISTORY

The scheduling includes two previously scheduled monuments Warwickshire 61 and 183:

1. Monument included in the Schedule on 16th October 1936 as:
COUNTY/ NUMBER: Warwickshire 61
NAME: Baginton Castle

2. Monument included in the Schedule on 17th December 1982 as:

COUNTY/NUMBER: Warwickshire 183
NAME: Medieval Settlement adjacent to Castle, Baginton

The reference of this monument is now:
NATIONAL MONUMENT NUMBER: 21540
NAME: Baginton Castle, associated settlement remains, ponds and mill sites

SCHEDULING REVISED ON 22nd April 1994