

EXTRACT FROM ENGLISH HERITAGE'S RECORD OF SCHEDULED MONUMENTS

MONUMENT: Melbourne Castle fortified manor and earlier medieval manorial remains

PARISH: MELBOURNE

DISTRICT: SOUTH DERBYSHIRE

COUNTY: DERBYSHIRE

NATIONAL MONUMENT NO: 23336

NATIONAL GRID REFERENCE(S): SK38912520

DESCRIPTION OF THE MONUMENT

The monument includes the known extent of the site of the medieval fortified manor known as Melbourne Castle. This early 14th century manor was preceded by earlier manor houses dating back to the first half of the 11th century. The fortified manor is believed to have incorporated part of a royal manor house noted in 13th century documents and is known to have possessed a variety of ancillary features at various periods in its history. The buried remains of earlier and later medieval buildings and associated manorial features will survive throughout the area of the scheduling, partly overlain by Castle Farm in the northern half and, in the southern half, sealed beneath the new housing development and residents' car-park which is now being completed on the site of Castle Mills and Castle Cottage. Both mill and cottage were demolished in the late 1980s. The Castle Street frontage of the mill formerly stood on the site of a row of cottages which were demolished after a fire in 1933. Knowledge of the fortified manor derives from field observation, a large body of documentary evidence held principally by the Duchy of Lancaster and a number of partial excavations. The latter were largely carried out in the northern half of the monument and include the discovery of a turret in the garden of Castle Cottage in the 1880s and the exposure of medieval wall footings and other features around Castle Farm in 1967, 1971 and 1987 by the owner of the farm, Mr John Blunt, and members of the Derbyshire Archaeological Society. Following the demolition of Castle Mills and Castle Cottage, limited excavation and field observation confirmed that medieval remains extended south of Castle Farm and included a massive wall footing interpreted as the curtain wall of the fortified manor. Further excavations carried out north of Castle Farm in 1973 revealed, in addition to pits of Neolithic date, a medieval boundary wall and a ditch of uncertain date. There is insufficient evidence to relate these features to the fortified and earlier manors, however, and so this area has not been included in the scheduling. The full extent and ground plan of the fortified manor, together with its sequence of construction, is not yet fully understood but its good state of preservation is attested to by the remains uncovered during the Blunt excavations and by an upstanding section of wall-core which measures 4m high and extends c.15m from east to west. At its west end, this wall stands as an exposed buttress-like feature in the garden of Castle Farm. Elsewhere it forms the back wall of outbuildings on the south side of the farmyard of Castle Farm and has been shown by excavation to have additional wall-footings extending off it both northwards under the farmyard and southwards into Castle

Orchard. The existence of 'subterranean apartments' beneath Castle Farm and 'considerable foundation walls...in many parts of the garden' were recorded in 1843 and 1889 by Joseph Deans and W Dashwood-Fane and at least some of these features were uncovered by the 1967 and 1971 excavations. These partial excavations, carried out in Castle Orchard, revealed a complex of ashlar-faced battered (sloping) wall plinths, extending southwards from the upstanding wall, which appear to represent the remains of projections or towers and may belong to more than one phase of building. Architectural features include the base of a flight of steps leading up to a robbed-out level, drip moulds designed to protect walls from rainwater, the respond or supporting column of a stone door jamb, drainage holes and some 38 mason's marks. In 1987, the need to disassemble and reconstruct the east end of the lean-to cart-shed on the north side of the upstanding medieval wall led to the discovery of a possible floor and a north-south running wall while, in the same year, the curving stone foundations of a tower or bastion were also found beneath the lean-to, some 10m to the west where they are now sealed beneath a concrete floor. Attempts to correlate the exposed remains with the building depicted on an 18th century drawing of the castle, copied from a survey executed in the reign of Elizabeth I, are problematic because it is not entirely clear which way the drawing is orientated. The location of the square-towered church on the right-hand side of the drawing suggests that it is a view of the west face of the manor but this is by no means certain. It is therefore not possible at this stage to interpret the remains other than to say that they belong to a substantial medieval building of late 12th to late 14th century date. Associated with the earlier and later medieval manor houses would have been a variety of ancillary and service buildings whose remains will be preserved in the open areas surrounding the core building. Some of these, such as the gatehouse, may also have been of stone construction although others are likely to have been timber-framed. Also surviving will be the buried remains of such features as stock-pens and drainage ditches, an example of which was found in 1988 in the south western area of the monument. Two additional ditches were recorded beneath Castle Mills in 1989 and were considered, possibly, to predate the massive stone wall believed to have been part of a curtain wall. The foundations of this wall were also noted during the construction of Castle Mills in 1857 when they were reported to be 12 feet thick and were exposed in one of the knitting shops. A second massive east-west wall was identified in 1989, 12m north of the first wall, together with some less substantial foundations and a possible robber trench, that is, a trench dug by stone-getters to obtain and remove stone from the foundations of a demolished wall. To the east, beneath the 1960s extension of Castle Mills, where mill footings are recorded as having cut through medieval foundations to a depth of 15 feet, a layer of medieval lead-glazed roof tiles was found. A medieval stone-lined well, found when the mill was constructed and used to supply its boiler until it was covered over in 1928, was not seen during the 1989 archaeological investigations but is likely to have been the same well found in a cellar in the north western corner of the mill and backfilled before these investigations began. The turret exposed in the 1880s was also examined and consists of a curving chamfered plinth adjoining, on its east side, a north-south wall which contains a door jamb and may be a continuation of one of the walls uncovered in Castle Orchard. The turret lies in the area of the monument designated as a resident's car-park for the sheltered housing development, and has been backfilled and covered over. There is a wealth of documentary evidence referring to Melbourne Castle. It is known, for example, that the manor was a royal possession from the time of Edward the Confessor until 1265 when Henry III granted it to his second son Edmund, Earl of Lancaster. References to a royal manor house predating the fortified manor include requests for repairs to the king's buildings in 1246 and 1248 and it is recorded that King John stayed there on several occasions between 1200 and 1215, once in the company of the Archbishop of Canterbury. Following the death of Edmund, Earl of Lancaster, in 1296, the manor passed to his son Thomas, the

second earl, who granted it in 1308 to his steward, Robert de Holland. The Patent Rolls for 1307-1313 indicate that, in 1311, Robert obtained licence from Edward II to crenellate, that is fortify, the manor house. The fortified manor can therefore be said to date from this time.

Construction work is known to have begun soon after licence was granted because, amongst the documents referring to the site are the returns of John Russell, Clerk of Works at Melbourne Castle, dated 1313-14. These returns are interesting in that they refer not only to costs for various works and wages for masons, mortarers, plasterers, smiths, carpenters and window-leaders but to features for which no archaeological evidence has yet been found but will nevertheless survive. These include a gate and a possible moat (the reference is to wages for 'flooding from the beech (sic) to the gate') and at least two pools, one of which is referred to as the 'new pool' and the other the 'old mill pool'. It is not clear whether the stone-faced 'main pool', mentioned in the same record, is one of these pools or a third. It is possible that the site of one of them is represented by an area of subsidence in the north-eastern quarter of the monument although, alternatively, this subsidence may mark the site of another sunken feature such as a cellar or a fishpond.

Building work was still going on in 1315 because, in that year, Master Peter de Bagworth, mason, and several other masons of the Earl of Lancaster at Melbourne, were involved in an armed assault on William Gretheued at his house in Ravenston, led by Robert de Holewell. During this time, the Earl of Lancaster, Earl Thomas, was in open rebellion against Edward II, allying himself with the Scots and, in 1312, unlawfully executing Piers Gaveston, the king's close friend. In 1321 he succeeded in banishing Edward's other favourites, the Despencers, but was immediately retaliated against by the king who moved against him in 1322, taking Tutbury Castle and finally defeating his forces at the Battle of Boroughbridge after which Thomas and Robert de Holland were executed as traitors. All Lancastrian property, including Melbourne Castle, was confiscated by the Crown and not restored until the accession of Edward III in 1327 when Thomas's brother, Henry became the third Earl of Lancaster. Earl Henry's son was made Duke of Lancaster and, following his death in 1361, that title passed to John of Gaunt, Edward III's third son, through his marriage to the Duke's daughter, Blanche. References to repairs done at Melbourne in Gaunt's time indicate the existence of a hall and great chamber, a chapel, a drawbridge and a bakehouse. After Gaunt's death in 1399 and the usurpation of the Crown by his son, the third Duke of Lancaster, Henry Bolingbroke, Melbourne again became a royal possession. A letter from Henry V to the keeper of the castle dated 22nd March 1416 ordered that repairs to the castle be carried out 'because certain of our French prisoners will be put there in security and under safeguard'. The prisoner in question was the Duke of Bourbon, captured at Agincourt in 1415, who was moved to Melbourne from Somerton in 1419 and held there for 19 years until released by Henry VI. References to the castle are more scarce after this date until the reign of Elizabeth I, although John Leland, during his tour of England and Wales in 1545, found it 'praty and yn meately good reparation'. Upon her accession, Elizabeth ordered a full survey of the possessions of the Duchy of Lancaster including, in 1564, a survey of Melbourne Castle. Another survey was ordered in 1576 when it was reported that the castle was in a fair state of decay though the stonework was good. In 1583, it was recommended by the Privy Council that the queen move her cousin, the imprisoned Mary, Queen of Scots, to Melbourne, and a description of the castle was provided which throws interesting light on its appearance at the time in that it was said to be constructed of lead-covered ashlar, had large spacious rooms that would need to be partitioned, floors of earth and plaster, walls that appear to have needed repointing and rendering since they were described as being too easily scaleable, and no paths or wall about the house 'so as being out of dors you are in the myre, for it is verie foule and unpleasaunt to walk round about...'. This description would suggest that, at some point in the later Middle Ages, the curtain wall around the castle had been demolished and that

the ward surrounding the main building had gone out of use. In the event, Mary was never moved to Melbourne and the castle ceased to be a residence. A survey of 1597 reported that it was used as a pound for stray cattle and, in 1604, under James I, it was sold first to Sir Edward Howard and a consortium of four others, then to Henry, Earl of Huntingdon who quickly dismantled it for its materials and built on its site the dwelling which is depicted on the enclosure map of 1630 and now forms the core of Castle Farm, a Grade II Listed Building.

Excluded from the scheduling are the house of Castle Farm and its outbuildings (with the exception of the upstanding section of medieval wall-core which forms the back wall of a lean-to shed on the south side of the farmyard and extends into the private garden south of the house), the buildings of the new housing development on the site of Castle Mills and Castle Cottage, all modern hard surfaces such as paths, carstands, patios and the yard of Castle Farm, and all modern boundary fencing and walls, although the ground beneath all these features is included as are the exposed medieval remains in Castle Orchard.

ASSESSMENT OF IMPORTANCE

Fortified manors were in most cases the residences of the lesser nobility and richer burgesses and date from the late 12th century and throughout the rest of the Middle Ages. Generally they comprise a hall and residential wing, domestic ranges and fortifications such as a moat or crenellated wall or both. A gatetower was a common feature of the better equipped.

Melbourne Castle is a very well documented example of a fortified manor built on the site of, and incorporating, an earlier royal manor house. Its importance as a royal manor lasted from the 11th to the mid-13th century when it was granted to the Earls of Lancaster. During the early 14th century it played an important role in the political history of England when it was associated with the most powerful baron in the country, Thomas, second Earl of Lancaster, who was a leading opponent of King Edward II. When Henry Bolingbroke, third Duke of Lancaster, became King Henry IV it again became a royal possession until sold by the Crown in 1604. Although the fortified manor does not survive well as a standing structure, limited excavation carried out in key areas has demonstrated that the buried remains of the manor house and other medieval features are extremely well preserved. This is the case even in areas disturbed by 19th century and later development. Elsewhere, in areas such as Castle Orchard and the gardens and yard of Castle Farm, which have suffered little disturbance since the demolition of the castle in the 16th century, archaeological remains of all periods of occupation are likely to survive intact and in situ.

SCHEDULING HISTORY

Monument included in the Schedule on 11th December 1973 as:

COUNTY/NUMBER: Derbyshire 229

NAME: Melbourne Castle

The reference of this monument is now:

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SCHEDULING REVISED ON 18th October 1996