

EXTRACT FROM ENGLISH HERITAGE'S RECORD OF SCHEDULED MONUMENTS

MONUMENT: Gains Castle: a 13th century ringwork and bailey

PARISH: ASHLEY

DISTRICT: TEST VALLEY

COUNTY: HAMPSHIRE

NATIONAL MONUMENT NO: 26727

NATIONAL GRID REFERENCE(S): SU38453086

DESCRIPTION OF THE MONUMENT

The monument includes a ringwork and bailey, with evidence for earlier occupation, situated on a spur of high ground overlooking the village of Ashley and alongside the old road from Winchester to Salisbury.

The bank and external ditch of the ringwork enclose a pentagonal area of approximately 0.55ha. The bank varies in size from approximately 6m wide and 1.5m high on the west side of the enclosure to over 13m wide and 3m high on the east. The ditch, which has been infilled on the west side by the construction of a road, also varies in size, from 5m wide and 1.5m deep on the north and south sides to over 8m wide and 2m deep on the east. In the north east corner of the bailey are the substantial flint footings of walls. These may represent the remains of a hall referred to in a documentary record of 1250, and recorded by Williams Freeman in 1913 as being 33m long with an internal round tower 13m in diameter on the north side.

The outer bailey lies to the west of the ringwork and is defined by much slighter earthworks. Where traceable within pasture, these include a low bank, approximately 5m wide and no more than 0.5m high with an outer ditch of similar width and approximately 0.3m deep. Additional parts of the outer bailey circuit can be traced as a low bank to the east of the church and a shallow ditch in woodland to the south of the ringwork. The Church of St Mary the Virgin lies within the outer bailey to the north of the ringwork. The church dates to the 12th century and archaeological excavation carried out at the time of its restoration suggested that it was preceded by domestic occupation which must therefore predate the construction of the ringwork castle.

In addition to references to the hall, historical documentation records that in 1200 William Briwere, the holder of the Manor of Ashley, was given a licence to fortify, or re-fortify his castle.

Excluded from the scheduling are the Church of St Mary the Virgin, which is Listed Grade II*, the church hall, all fences, sheds, paths, roads and driveways, lined ponds and watercourses, the brick water supply tank and associated pipes, the ground beneath all these features is, however, included.

ASSESSMENT OF IMPORTANCE

Ringworks are medieval fortifications built and occupied from the late Anglo-Saxon period to the later 12th century. They comprised a small defended area containing buildings which was surrounded or partly surrounded by a

substantial ditch and a bank surmounted by a timber palisade or, rarely, a stone wall. Occasionally a more lightly defended embanked enclosure, the bailey, adjoined the ringwork. Ringworks acted as strongholds for military operations and in some cases as defended aristocratic or manorial settlements. They are rare nationally with only 200 recorded examples and less than 60 with baileys. As such, and as one of a limited number and very restricted range of Anglo-Saxon and Norman fortifications, ringworks are of particular significance to our understanding of the period.

Gains Castle is well preserved, the substantial earthwork defences of the ringwork enclosing an area within which structural remains survive. The presence of the earthworks representing the bailey provides definition for the site as a whole and emphasises its relationship with the contemporary Church of St Mary.

SCHEDULING HISTORY

Monument included in the Schedule on 11th November 1954 as:

COUNTY/NUMBER: Hampshire 46

NAME: Church Close or Gain's Castle, Ashley

Scheduling amended on 12th February 1981 to:

COUNTY/NUMBER: Hampshire 46

NAME: Church Close and Gains Castle, Ashley

The reference of this monument is now:

NATIONAL MONUMENT NUMBER: 26727

NAME: Gains Castle: a 13th century ringwork and bailey

SCHEDULING REVISED ON 16th May 1997