

EXTRACT FROM ENGLISH HERITAGE'S RECORD OF SCHEDULED MONUMENTS

MONUMENT: Ringwork and bailey immediately south of St Helen and Holy Cross Church

PARISH: SHERIFF HUTTON

DISTRICT: RYEDALE

COUNTY: NORTH YORKSHIRE

NATIONAL MONUMENT NO: 30114

NATIONAL GRID REFERENCE(S): SE65706621

DESCRIPTION OF THE MONUMENT

The monument includes the substantial remains of a ringwork, a Norman earthwork castle, sited immediately to the south of the Church of St Helen and Holy Cross. It also includes part of the associated bailey to the west, together with earthworks relating to the later use of the area to the south and east.

The date of the castle is not known for certain. There is documentary evidence for a castle built at 'Hoton' by Bertram de Bulman as a threat to Ripon c.1140. This was attributed to Sheriff Hutton, which is 11km from Ripon, but the reference is now thought to refer to Hutton Conyers, which is only 1.2km distant. Most ringworks were built immediately after the Norman Conquest or during the civil war between Stephen and Matilda (1138-1153). The earthwork castle at Sheriff Hutton was replaced by the stone built quadrangular castle, 500m to the west, begun by John Lord Neville of Raby in 1382.

The castle has a small inner ward or courtyard about 20m square, surrounded by substantial earthwork ramparts with a deep ditch beyond. The external face of the ramparts forms a rectangle in plan, 50m east-west and 40m north-south. The eastern rampart is broader than either the north or south sides and has a slight terrace stepping down into the inner ward. The western side of the rampart is cut through to provide the entrance to the ward, with a causeway crossing the ditch at this point. The ramparts are at their highest either side of this west entrance. The ditch is 'U' shaped in both cross section and plan, and extends around just the north, west and south sides of the ramparts. There is no earthwork evidence of an infilled eastern ditch to complete the circuit, nor that the ditch had an external bank. To the west of the inner ward, across the causeway over the ditch, there is a level area bound to the north and south by a break of slope to lower ground. This marks the area of the outer bailey, the enclosure attached to the ringwork. The far west end of the bailey has been lost under modern housing and the north side is incorporated into a garden. To the east of the ringwork there is a toft and croft, the earthwork remains of a house platform (toft) with an associated small enclosure (the croft). To the south of the toft, running along the southern side of the ringwork and bailey, there is a set of ridge and furrow which is cut by the field boundary that forms the southern extent of the monument, providing evidence of the medieval field system in the area. All modern fencing, the churchyard wall and items of garden furniture are

excluded from the scheduling, although the ground beneath these features is 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.

Sheriff Hutton ringwork is well preserved and is a rare example of one with an associated bailey. It is in a classic location for a ringwork, adjacent to the church on an area of high ground overlooking the village. It has commanding views across the Vale of York to the south and would thus have been an effective symbol of the local Norman lord's authority. Sheriff Hutton ringwork is notable for being rectangular rather than the more common circular design and its importance is further heightened by the nearby location of the later stone built castle.

SCHEDULING HISTORY

Monument included in the Schedule on 4th January 1937 as:

COUNTY/NUMBER: Yorkshire 259

NAME: Earthworks near Church

Scheduling amended on 1st April 1974 to:

COUNTY/NUMBER: North Yorkshire 259

NAME: Earthworks near Church

The reference of this monument is now:

NATIONAL MONUMENT NUMBER: 30114

NAME: Ringwork and bailey immediately south of St Helen and Holy Cross Church

SCHEDULING REVISED ON 29th January 1998