

EXTRACT FROM ENGLISH HERITAGE'S RECORD OF SCHEDULED MONUMENTS

MONUMENT: Stogursey Castle

PARISH: STOGURSEY

DISTRICT: WEST SOMERSET

COUNTY: SOMERSET

NATIONAL MONUMENT NO: 33708

NATIONAL GRID REFERENCE(S): ST20324258

DESCRIPTION OF THE MONUMENT

The monument includes a motte and bailey castle situated on low lying ground to the south of Stogursey village. The castle includes a motte with a stone shell keep, an inner bailey and an outer bailey. The raised motte is sub-circular in plan and is surrounded by a berm approximately 15m wide; both motte and berm are enclosed by a water-filled moat approximately 30m wide which was crossed by a single drawbridge. A limestone curtain wall survives in places, rising to a maximum of 6m above the surface of the motte, with the remains of a semi-circular bastion on the west side. An embrasure for an arrow slit, and the remains of a second, survive on the south wall and openings, possibly windows, survive on the straight, north wall. Evidence for timber and stone structures within the curtain wall was revealed during partial excavations in 1981/1982. The remains of two drum towers protrude into the moat on the east side and these have been incorporated into the foundations of a 17th century cottage. The motte is connected to the inner bailey by a post-medieval stone bridge and by a modern reconstruction of the original wooden drawbridge. The causeway bridge and the remains of the curtain wall of the castle, part of which is incorporated into a cottage, are both Listed Grade II*.

The inner bailey is located on the east side and is an irregular crescent shape, slightly higher than the surrounding ground. It is defined by a steep scarp on the east and south sides and on the north by a mill pond, which has been formed by a dam across the stream feeding the moat, to which it is connected by a stone wall with a gap. Earthworks of rectangular depressions and mounds may indicate the sites of buildings and other features possibly used in defending the castle entrance. The outer bailey is more substantial in size and is located at a lower level than, and to the east of, the inner bailey. It is sub-rectangular in plan and is defined on the east by a steep bank which drops away to a stream and by steep banks on the south side. The extent of the outer bailey to the north has been largely obscured by a garden and modern track. The interior of the outer bailey is comparatively even and is divided by a hollow way leading in from the east in the direction of the motte entrance.

The earliest known documentary reference to Stogursey Castle is from 1215 when it was recorded to have been held for King John, although its plan of a motte with two baileys suggest an earlier Norman date of the 11th or

early 12th century. It remained in use until 1459 when it was burnt down during the Wars of the Roses while being used in support of the Lancastrian cause.

The gatehouse cottage, the stone built garden shed within the shell keep, the stone built byre in the north part of the outer bailey, all fencing, all hard standing, all signposts, all modern gateways, all drains and all modern paving are excluded from the scheduling, although the ground beneath these features is included.

ASSESSMENT OF IMPORTANCE

Motte and bailey castles are medieval fortifications introduced into Britain by the Normans. They comprised a large conical mound of earth or rubble, the motte, surmounted by a palisade and a stone or timber tower. In a majority of examples an embanked enclosure containing additional buildings, the bailey, adjoined the motte. Motte castles and motte-and-bailey castles acted as garrison forts during offensive military operations, as strongholds, and, in many cases, as aristocratic residences and as centres of local or royal administration. Built in towns, villages and open countryside, motte and bailey castles generally occupied strategic positions dominating their immediate locality and, as a result, are the most visually impressive monuments of the early post-Conquest period surviving in the modern landscape. Over 600 motte castles or motte-and-bailey castles are recorded nationally, with examples known from most regions. As one of a restricted range of recognised early post-Conquest monuments, they are particularly important for the study of Norman Britain and the development of the feudal system. Although many were occupied for only a short period of time, motte castles continued to be built and occupied from the 11th to the 13th centuries, after which they were superseded by other types of castle.

Stogursey Castle is a fine example of a motte and bailey castle for which there are many historical references recording a continual occupation from its probable Norman foundation in the 11th or early 12th century until its demise in 1459 when it fell victim to the ravages of the Wars of the Roses.

Partial excavation has shown that below ground remains of stone and timber structures are likely to be well-preserved and despite being renovated, the moat is likely to contain waterlogged deposits. The monument will contain archaeological information relating to the construction and use of the site, the lives of its inhabitants and the landscape in which they lived.

SCHEDULING HISTORY

Monument included in the Schedule on 14th October 1936 as:
COUNTY/NUMBER: Somerset 178
NAME: Stogursey Castle

The reference of this monument is now:
NATIONAL MONUMENT NUMBER: 33708
NAME: Stogursey Castle

SCHEDULING REVISED ON 22nd December 2003