

## EXTRACT FROM ENGLISH HERITAGE'S RECORD OF SCHEDULED MONUMENTS

MONUMENT: Ringwork in Castle Wood, immediately south west of Little Knowle

PARISH: BRENCHLEY

DISTRICT: TUNBRIDGE WELLS

COUNTY: KENT

NATIONAL MONUMENT NO: 34300

NATIONAL GRID REFERENCE(S): TQ69224278

### DESCRIPTION OF THE MONUMENT

The monument includes a medieval ringwork, formerly interpreted as a motte castle, constructed on the crest of a sandstone and clay spur of Castle Hill, which forms part of the High Weald in Kent. The ringwork is situated north of Castle Hill village. At its centre lies a roughly circular area, measuring up to 60m in diameter, enclosed by a bank which may have originally supported a timber palisade. This bank is encircled by a dry defensive ditch up to 10m wide and about 5m deep, which has become partly waterlogged due to later disturbance. The ditch is in turn encircled by an outer bank, which has since been pierced to allow access to the ditch on its north eastern side. The material from this excavation is deposited in the form of a small, curving earthwork, projecting from the outer edge of the bank. This earthwork feature is included in the scheduling. The ringwork defences are strengthened to the west by the addition of a further ditch with a slight outer bank.

Access to the interior was originally by a simple causewayed entrance through the south eastern defences, approached today by a footpath which crosses the ringwork and leaves via a gap, created at a later date, in the north western side of the earthwork. Several timber buildings would once have stood within the central enclosure, although no visible remains of these survive today.

Evidence for subsequent reuse of the monument includes a small circular mound and a rectangular enclosure, which partly overlie the encircling bank in the north and west. Metal working slag has also been recovered from the surface of the bank on its north eastern side, indicating that the monument may have been reused for small scale industrial activity.

The fenceline, which crosses the north eastern edge of the monument, is excluded from the scheduling, although the ground beneath it 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.

Despite some subsequent disturbance, the ringwork in Castle Wood immediately south west of Little Knowle survives well, and retains archaeological and environmental evidence relating to its construction and original use, as well as its abandonment and later reuse. Furthermore, the presence of such a stronghold in this part of Kent is of considerable historical importance in contributing towards our understanding of the early post-Conquest geography of this region.

#### SCHEDULING HISTORY

Monument included in the Schedule on 14th July 1933 as:

COUNTY/NUMBER: Kent 39

NAME: Castle Wood Castle

The reference of this monument is now:

NATIONAL MONUMENT NUMBER: 34300

NAME: Ringwork in Castle Wood, immediately south west of Little Knowle

SCHEDULING REVISED ON 07th November 2001