

EXTRACT FROM ENGLISH HERITAGE'S RECORD OF SCHEDULED MONUMENTS

MONUMENT: Greasley Castle

PARISH: GREASLEY

DISTRICT: BROXTOWE

COUNTY: NOTTINGHAMSHIRE

NATIONAL MONUMENT NO: 35601

NATIONAL GRID REFERENCE(S): SK49094705

DESCRIPTION OF THE MONUMENT

The monument includes the standing, earthwork and buried remains of Greasley Castle and associated fishponds. It lies 100m above sea level on a south east facing slope overlooking Gilt Brook. All the standing remains of the castle are Listed Grade II and incorporated into the present farm buildings.

A document dated to between 1279 and 1321 records that Greasley, or Gryseleye manor as it was then known, included a dwelling with outbuildings, a windmill, a dovehouse, pasture protected by wood and other land assigned to its use. The manor passed to Nicholas de Cantelupe in 1320 who was granted a licence to crenellate from Edward III in 1340. It was from this time that the building became known as a castle. Although described as a castle its position in the landscape offers little military advantage and implies that the building was more a statement of wealth and status. In form it is comparable to a range of fortified houses. In line with other dignitaries of the time, Nicholas de Cantelupe was keen to emphasize his position and soon after the granting of the licence to crenellate built Beauvale Charterhouse just north of Greasley Castle. One of the reasons for the founding of the Charterhouse was the desire to ensure 'the good estate of Archbishop Zouch' the founders 'most dear lord and cousin'. The charter was witnessed at Greasley on 9th December 1343 by the archbishop of York, the bishops of Durham, Lincoln and Litchfield and the earls of Derby, Northampton and Huntingdon.

Following the de Cantelupe family Greasley fell into the hands of the Zouch family who held it until 1485. At the Battle of Bosworth Lord Zouch took sides with Richard III and was slain, his property forfeit to the crown. The property was given to John Savage in 1486 but in 1608 was bought by Sir John Manners.

It is unclear when or how the castle fell into disrepair but there is a tradition which suggests Greasley was taken and overthrown during the Civil War. In 1797 it was recorded that the property was totally destroyed bar all but a wall or two.

The monument survives as a series of standing, buried and earthwork remains surrounding Greasley Castle Farm. The surviving standing remains are incorporated into the north, west and east ranges of the farm buildings to the east of Greasley Castle Farm. The northernmost wall is approximately 30m long

and formed of irregularly coursed stone approximately 1.5m thick and 2m high. At its western end are the remains of abutments and of a worked stone blocked segmental arch. The arch is supported by modern rendered brickwork. Excavations in 1933 revealed evidence of a round tower in this corner of the wall and suggested that this was part of a curtain wall which surrounded the fortified house. The curtain wall continues along the western wall for approximately 5.5m. In the modern brick of the gable, in the north west corner of the farm buildings, are a reused two light mullioned window and an ornamental stone star.

A rectangular building, which forms the east range of the modern farm buildings, is built of reused stone but incorporates short lengths of original walling. A fine arched entrance with worn steps and the remains of a square headed decorated window were revealed in the eastern wall during alterations to the buildings. It is believed the doorway was the entrance to the hall from the courtyard and implies the hall was approximately 10m wide although its length is unknown. The barns are included in the listing for the remains of Greasley Castle.

The standing remains of the castle are surrounded by extensive earthworks which appear to represent several phases of activity on the site. The remains of a dry moat approximately 1.5m deep are visible to the north and west of the farm buildings but detail of this has been degraded by the modern road and the access road to the farmyard. In conjunction with the standing remains these earthworks probably represent the earliest phase of activity.

From both the north western and north eastern corners of the moat runs a flat topped bank, forming a large sub-rectangular enclosure. The bank survives up to 1.5m in height and 8m wide although its dimensions are not consistent. To the east of the moat the bank has been degraded and truncated by the straightening of the modern road but is clearly apparent to the east of the farmyard entrance. To the west, the bank has been truncated by a graveyard wall. The bank reappears at the south eastern corner of the graveyard and continues in a south westerly direction for approximately 110m before turning to the south east. There are no indications of a ditch on the north and east sides but an outer ditch, approximately 1m deep, is evident along the western and part of the southern side. This is partly obscured by a hedgerow. The enclosure incorporates the moat and fortified house and is believed to have enclosed the outlying buildings and domestic structures associated with the manor. In its south eastern corner are the earthwork remains of a complex series of fishponds, four in total with connecting sluices. These extend over an area of approximately 80 sq m and survive up to 2.5m in depth. The ponds were fed by a spring and drained off into a now dry and infilled channel running from the south east corner of the ponds.

Aerial photographs taken in the mid-20th century show the sites of apparent buildings within the enclosure particularly to the east of the current farm yard. Here, the site of a building with a pond to the south and the whole bounded by a bank and outer ditch are clearly evident. Earthworks survive up to a height of 0.5m within this area but are more difficult to define clearly from the ground surface.

To the west of the fishponds continuing to the western edge of the monument and within the enclosure associated with the fortified house, are the earthwork remains of part of a medieval open field system. These are visible as part of at least one furlong (group of lands or cultivation strips) marked by headlands. The cultivation strips collectively form ridge and furrow and survive to a height of at least 0.25m.

Greasley Castle farmhouse and the mid-17th century font, which are Listed

Buildings Grade II, all modern fences, the tennis court, track and path surfaces are excluded from the scheduling, although the ground beneath these is included.

ASSESSMENT OF IMPORTANCE

Fortified houses were residences belonging to some of the richest and most powerful members of society. Their design reflects a combination of domestic and military elements. In some instances, the fortifications may be cosmetic additions to an otherwise conventional high status dwelling, giving a military aspect while remaining practically indefensible. They are associated with individuals or families of high status and their ostentatious architecture often reflects a high level of expenditure. The nature of the fortification varies, but can include moats, curtain walls, a gatehouse and other towers, gunports and crenellated parapets.

Their buildings normally included a hall used as communal space for domestic and administrative purposes, kitchens, service and storage areas. In later houses the owners had separate private living apartments, these often receiving particular architectural emphasis. In common with castles, some fortified houses had outer courts beyond the main defences in which stables, brew houses, granaries and barns were located.

Fortified houses were constructed in the medieval period, primarily between the 15th and 16th centuries, although evidence from earlier periods, such as the increase in the number of licences to crenellate in the reigns of Edward I and Edward II, indicates that the origins of the class can be traced further back. They are found primarily in several areas of lowland England: in upland areas they are outnumbered by structures such as bastles and tower houses which fulfilled many of the same functions. As a rare monument type, with fewer than 200 identified examples, all examples exhibiting significant surviving archaeological remains are considered of national importance.

Medieval society was supported by a communal system of agriculture based on large, unenclosed open arable fields. These large fields were subdivided into strips (known as lands) which were allocated to individual tenants. The cultivation of these strips with heavy ploughs pulled by oxen-teams produced long, wide ridges and the resultant 'ridge and furrow' where it survives is the most obvious physical indication of the open field system. Individual strips or lands were laid out in groups known as furlongs defined by terminal headlands at the plough turning-points and lateral grass baulks. Furlongs were in turn grouped into large open fields. Well-preserved ridge and furrow, especially in its original context adjacent to village earthworks, is both an important source of information about medieval agrarian life and a distinctive contribution to the character of the historic landscape. It is usually now covered by the hedges or walls of subsequent field enclosure.

The wealthier members of the community, in addition to regulating the communal agricultural system, often maintained fishponds for their own private supply of meat. Fishponds were an expression of wealth and status during the medieval period and later and are usually attached to monastic institutions or the main manorial complex.

The building of fishponds began in the medieval period and peaked in the 12th century. The difficulty of obtaining fresh meat in the winter and the value placed on fish in terms of its protein content and as a status food may have been factors which favoured the development of fishponds and which made them so valuable. The practice of constructing fishponds declined after the Dissolution of the Monasteries in the 16th century although in some areas it continued into the 17th century. Documentary sources provide a wealth of information about the way fishponds were managed. The main species of fish kept were eel, tench, pickerel, bream, perch and roach. Most fishponds were

located close to villages, manors or monasteries or within parks so that a watch could be kept on them to prevent poaching. Archaeologically fishponds are important for their association with other classes of medieval monument and in providing evidence of site economy.

Greasley Castle is a relatively well-preserved and important example of a fortified house. The standing, buried and earthwork remains will retain important archaeological and environmental information. The fishponds, the moat and the bank and ditch defining the larger enclosure, are particularly conducive to the accumulation and preservation of artefactual, environmental and ecofactual material and may retain important waterlogged deposits. The importance of the site is increased by the survival of spatially associated features. Taken as a whole Greasley Castle will contribute greatly to the knowledge and understanding of fortified houses and their position in the medieval and post-medieval landscape.

SCHEDULING HISTORY

Monument included in the Schedule on 14th March 1952 as:

COUNTY/NUMBER: Nottinghamshire 34

NAME: Greasley Castle

The reference of this monument is now:

NATIONAL MONUMENT NUMBER: 35601

NAME: Greasley Castle

SCHEDULING REVISED ON 08th September 2003