

# **The Archaeology of Castle Slighting in the Middle Ages**

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# Abstract

Medieval castle slighting is the phenomenon in which a high-status fortification is demolished in a time of conflict. At its heart are issues about symbolism, the role of castles in medieval society, and the politics of power. Although examples can be found throughout the Middle Ages (1066–1500) in England, Wales and Scotland there has been no systematic study of the archaeology of castle slighting. Understanding castle slighting enhances our view of medieval society and how it responded to power struggles.

This study interrogates the archaeological record to establish the nature of castle slighting: establishing how prevalent it was chronologically and geographically; which parts of castles were most likely to be slighted and why this is significant; the effects on the immediate landscape; and the wider role of destruction in medieval society. The contribution of archaeology is especially important as contemporary records give little information about this phenomenon. Using information recovered from excavation and survey allows this thesis to challenge existing narratives about slighting, especially with reference to the civil war between Stephen and Matilda (1139–1154) and the view that slighting was primarily to prevent an enemy from using a fortification.

The thesis proposes a new framework for understanding how slighting is represented in the archaeological record and how it might be recognised in the future. Using this methodology, a total of 60 sites were identified. Slighting often coincides with periods of civil war, illustrating the importance of slighting as a tool of social control and the re-assertion of authority in the face of rebellion. Slighting did not necessarily encompass an entire site some parts of the castle – halls and chapels – were typically deliberately excluded from the destruction. There are also examples which fit the old narrative that slighting was used to prevent a fortification falling into enemy hands, but these cases are in the minority and are typically restricted to Scotland during the Scottish Wars of Independence.

Given the castle's role in shaping the landscape – acting as a focus for seigneurial power and precipitating the creation and growth of towns – it is important to understand how slighting effected nearby associated settlements. The evidence suggests that larger towns were able to prosper despite the disruption of slighting while smaller settlements were more likely to decline into obscurity. Importantly towns themselves were very rarely included in the destruction of slighting.

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## List of Abbreviations

CBA – Council for British Archaeology

CPAT – Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust

EHD – *English Historical Documents*

GAT – Gwendd Archaeological Trust

HER – Historic Environment Record

MOLA – Museum of London Archaeology

OED – Oxford English Dictionary

RCAHMCWM – Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments  
and Constructions in Wales and Monmouthshire

RCAHMS – Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of  
Scotland

RCAHMW – Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of  
Wales

RCHME – Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England

VCH – Victoria County History

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# Chapter 1 – Introduction

## 1.1 Introduction: exploring slighting

This thesis is an in-depth analysis of the archaeological evidence for the deliberate destruction of castles in England, Wales, and Scotland between 1066 and 1500. It asks how we can identify different types of destruction in the archaeological record. By re-examining evidence from excavations, standing building surveys, topographical surveys, and geophysical surveys, combined with documentary analysis, and bringing together information it is possible to arrive at a new understanding of the act known as ‘slighting’.

This chapter begins with the definition of ‘castle’ used in this study before giving a brief overview of destruction from the Roman period onwards, using some key events to demonstrate the varied meanings of destruction. It establishes the need for a study of the later stages of the castle biography (the point of destruction before later use or reuse of the site) and then provides a definition for ‘slighting’ as used in this thesis. It concludes by explaining the scope of the study, explaining the research questions, and outlining the structure of the remainder of this thesis.

## 1.2 What is a castle?

Perhaps the first surviving mention of castles comes from France in the mid-9<sup>th</sup> century. In 864 Charles the Bald issued the Edict of Pîtres which amongst other things ordered that anyone who had built a fortification without permission must dismantle it

And we wish and expressly command that whoever constructs in these times *castella* and *firmitates* and *haias* without our order, on the Kalends of August they are to have pulled down all such *firmitates*, because their neighbours and those living nearby put up with much pillaging and hindrances as a result

Edict of Pîtres, trans. Hill 2013, 154–155

The terms *castella*, *firmitates*, and *haias* can respectively translate to ‘stronghold’, ‘defensive works’, and ‘palisades’, though the meanings are imprecise (Hill 2013, 85, 157–158). The term *castella* was an amorphous word with many different uses in the Middle Ages, indicating any type of fortification so while it is possible this may not have referred to castles as understood by

archaeologists the link between authority and destruction is clear. It is striking that even in what may be the earliest reference to a castle (Brown 2004, 8), destruction is evidently as a means of control.

Creighton (2012, 26) dubbed the definition of the castle 'the eternal question' of castle studies and it is an issue that cannot be avoided, though in practice this study deals with very few sites where it is unclear whether the structure in question was a castle. The problem of defining what a castle is lies in the fact there is such variety in form and function between the thousands of examples in the British Isles alone, and the perception of what constitutes a castle changed within the medieval period, as well as within modern scholarship (see Johnson 2002 Chapter 1 for a theoretical discussion of what constitutes a castle). Such complexity resists being reduced to a single sentence. However, the definition underpinning this thesis is that a castle is a high-status residential building with elements of fortification.

Even with this approach, there are potential pit falls: should tower houses be considered castles and where should the chronological line in the sand be drawn? *Castellarium Anglicanum*, an index of castles in England and Wales compiled in the 1980s, treated Henry VIII's artillery fortifications as castles, a decision which drew criticism from some reviewers but one that was appropriate for an index (Barton 1984, 375–378; King 1988, 173). For this study, however, they will be excluded from consideration because they were created in a different social context to other castles, and with a focus primarily on defence against overseas forces. Even leaving aside issues of design and weaponry, they were structures with a different social purpose. Tower houses were also included in the same index but categorised separately from castles as again they present a different architectural form. Though tower houses are common in northern England and Scotland, so few sites from these two areas presented evidence of slighting there was no need to consider tower houses as separate entities from castles.

### **1.3 Destruction through the ages**

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century we are familiar with the many flavours of destruction. There are plenty of examples of natural disasters which are indiscriminate in whom they affect. Historic buildings are torn down to make way for new structures, even at internationally important sites such as Mecca where 400–500 historic

sites have been lost in the later 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> century (Taylor 2011), or the demolition in 2015 of the Carlton Tavern in Maida Vale, the last remnant of the area's pre-Second World War architecture (Watts 2015). The Bronze Age roadway in Mayne, Ireland has been gradually, and legally, turned into mulch since its discovery in 2005 and after a decade less than a quarter of the road survived (Magan 2015). There are acts of iconoclasm by the so-called Islamic State (IS) in the Middle East, in which priceless remnants of past cultures are destroyed to undermine any nationalism that may be an alternative to IS, and to elicit an emotional reaction (Roberts 2015). Destruction is sometimes anthropogenic, sometimes natural, and always affects society in profound ways. Anthropogenic destruction is nothing new, and the past is strewn with examples which stand out.

Throughout prehistory and history destruction has taken many forms and roles, and when carried out by human action often had social issues of power and control at the forefront, used by both oppressor and rebel. According to legend, when Rome conquered Carthage in 146 BC the city was utterly destroyed, and salt mixed with the soil to make the farmland unfit for agriculture (Neil 2008, 4). In Britain, the Iceni revolt against Roman rule in 60/61 AD included the burning of Colchester, one of the first and most important towns in Roman Britain. Despite nearly two millennia of later activity archaeologists discovered a Boudican destruction layer within the town, varying in thickness but surviving in some parts as a context some 0.5m thick (Crummy 1997, 78–83). This shows not only was destruction used as a tool against perceived oppression but given the right conditions evidence can remain even if a site has been reused. In Roman culture the act of destroying monuments dedicated to a person, termed *damnatio memoriae* by modern historians, was 'a posthumous destruction of his or her very essence or being' (Varner 2004, 2). However, the meaning behind the act was not as straightforward as removing all trace of them as a defaced monument begs the question 'what used to be there' rather than obliterating the memory, and instead it imposes a new narrative. The act of destroying a malefactor's house as a monumental symbol of their previous power has started to receive attention from scholars, particularly in an attempt to understand its social meaning rather than simply creating a history of destruction (Roller 2010). This has some parallels with slighting, and the 'negative *exemplum*' as Roller terms it may be a transferable concept where the

act was linked to rebellion and reasserting control. The destruction of a castle may have been intended to remind people of the misdeeds of the owner in the same way the building itself was initially intended to evoke their standing in society. The visual impact of the castle was an immediate statement of lordship and power, and this is particularly evident through Anglo-Norman great towers which were sometimes ceremonial spaces (Marshall 2016: 160–163). Later in the medieval period decoration included coats of arms and even statuary above entrances as can be seen on the gatehouses at Caernarfon, Denbigh, and Lancaster. When a symbol of power and authority is defaced or damaged it inverts the meaning it was meant to convey and the strength and status of the owner is subverted (Creighton 2012, 61–62).

The destruction of religious imagery in the early medieval period, especially the Byzantine Iconoclasm of 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> centuries, was the material reaction to threats to Christianity. Heads and phalli in artworks were often mutilated; the latter may be particularly significant as a Roman symbol of protection (Prusac 2014). Iconoclasm varied regionally, with areas further from the heart of the Roman Empire employing more destructive methods, indicating motives other than religious doctrine were also a consideration (Pollini 2012; Prusac 2014; Sande 2014). The end of the Western Roman Empire is commonly linked to invasions bringing destruction. In Britain the abandonment of buildings is often mentioned in archaeological literature as evidence for the end of Roman rule but the reasons for their subsequent destruction are infrequently given consideration (Gerrard 2008). A mixture of decay and deliberate destruction needs to be fully unpicked to understand the nature of change in this period. The Early Middle Ages witnessed Viking invasions in the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> centuries in north-western Europe. In the Viking world, halls were socially important buildings and a significant number met a violent end, and many were burnt as evidenced by the sites at Bejsebakken (Denmark), Gamla Uppsala, and Hogom (both Sweden) (Carstens 2014, 16–20). In Viking mythology, the burning of the hall of the gods was one of the signs marking the beginning of Ragnarok, the end of the world (Carstens 2014, 16–20). The idea that the destruction of a high-status building was closely linked to the owner's changing power and authority is clear.

The Norman Conquest of England encountered resistance in the north, particularly from Yorkshire. This led to reprisals from William the Conqueror

known at the 'Harrying of the North' between 1069 and 1070. Until the late 20<sup>th</sup> century it was generally accepted that the destruction had been systematic and 'almost total' based on the accounts of near contemporary chronicles and the number of vills recorded as 'waste' in the Domesday Book (Dalton 1994). A reinterpretation of the word 'waste' – suggesting in this context it meant no tax was forthcoming rather than meaning the land was uncultivated or deserted – has questioned this interpretation. It has also been proposed other factors such as raids from Scotland contributed to many vills being recorded as waste in 1086 (Palliser 1993, 9–13). This tendency to follow the path of least resistance when searching for a reason for destruction results in a simplified version of history. It has led to the assumption that many castles with evidence of slighting in the 12<sup>th</sup> century were destroyed in relation to civil war between Stephen and Matilda, often referred to as 'the Anarchy'. There is the further assumption so-called 'adulterine castles' built during this period were demolished soon afterwards (Brown 2004, 155–156).

Destruction as part of war was cross-societal, affecting common people, nobility, and the clergy as illustrated by the *Gesta Stephani* and the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* which document the ravages of civil war inflicted on 12<sup>th</sup>-century England (King 1984). As such, this study looks at how the landscape was treated as well as examining castle slighting directly. Castles are the central focus of this thesis, and there are numerous documented instances in the Middle Ages when they were deliberately destroyed, giving some context to the events. For example, the Bishop of Winchester was a leading figure during 'the Anarchy' and the contemporary chronicler Robert of Torigni asserted all the bishop's castles were destroyed (King 1983a, 189, 191, 194; 1983b, 444, 465, 489). The peace treaty which concluded the revolt of 1173–74 stipulated that 'Our lord the king and all his liegemen and barons are to receive possession of all their lands and castles which they held fifteen days before his sons withdrew from him' (Warren 1973, 135–138). Despite this, many castles were slighted according to the documentary evidence (King 1983a and 1983b) and the property of the most powerful earls supporting the rebellion made up about half of these sites. Slighting was demonstrably a tool of punishment, reducing someone's social status, as further demonstrated by the actions of King John in response to a perceived threat from two of his magnates. In 1212 rumours of an assassination attempt reached the king and the two suspects, Robert FitzWalter

and Eustace de Vesci, fled the country. As a result, John confiscated their castles and destroyed them (Warren 1978, 199–200; Brown 1959, 254–255). Following the English conquest of Wales in 1283, Welsh resentment against the new rule was brought to a head in 1294 in the revolt of Madog ap Llywelyn. The rising began with the attack on the church at Llanfaes (Anglesey) and escalated to the sack of Caernarfon, Wales' administrative centre. The town walls and the castle were incomplete and deliberately damaged, whilst documents important to the administration of Wales were destroyed (Griffiths 1955). During the Scottish Wars of Independence, Robert Bruce pioneered a policy of dismantling his own castles (1307–1327) to prevent the English from using them against him (Cornell 2008). This type of destruction is much less commonly attested to and slighting typically took the form of damaging an opponent's castles. The only parallel within England relates to King John's preparations for a presumed French invasion in 1216. He ordered the slighting of Pevensey, Hastings, Knepp, and Chichester (all in Sussex), and Portchester (Hampshire) (Salzman 1935; King 1983a, 193), however the orders do not appear to have been acted upon. When Owain Glendower rebelled against English rule in Wales in 1400 he began a campaign which resulted in the sacking of around 40 towns and boroughs across Wales (Soulsby 1983). These are not the exclusive situations in which slighting took place but provide much of the historical framework in which events discussed in the following chapters took place.

Beyond Britain, the Crusades brought destruction to the Middle East and places en route – not least that caused by the Fourth Crusade's visit to Constantinople (Phillips 2004a) – while the Mongols left swathes of destruction in their wake (DeVries 2008). The post-medieval period in Britain brought the Dissolution of the Monasteries (Fig. 1.1) in the 16<sup>th</sup> century and the Civil War of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, two events which left a distinct impact on high-status buildings, first with the dismantling and cannibalisation of building materials from religious houses and second the slighting of castles. Methods similar to those employed in the slighting of castles were used to demolish the monasteries: undermining, and even the use of gunpowder in some cases (Morriss 2003, 239–240). Despite the overriding narrative of destruction, an often-underappreciated element of the dissolution was that many of the sites were repurposed, with around half given a new use (Howard 2003, 221) and architectural elements from dismantled buildings were often taken elsewhere for incorporation into





Fig. 1.1. A woodcut by Matthias Gerung made around 1547 depicting the 'destruction of the Catholic church'. British Museum 1867,0713.107.

other structures. In 17<sup>th</sup>-century France, Cardinal Richelieu instigated a policy of dismantling castles that were seen as bases of opposition to royal power (Mesqui 1997, 149). Through to the present-day destruction is a force that shapes society, used to control and intimidate. Lila Rakoczy (2007, 149) finished her thesis on the archaeology of castle slighting in the English Civil War



of the 17<sup>th</sup> century just six years after 9/11, mentioning how this impacted her access to demolitions experts. Today (in 2017) in the Middle East IS destroy traces of the region's history in order to assert their own hegemony, reminding us that the study of destruction is still sadly relevant.

#### **1.4 Destruction as a phenomenon**

For castles at least, it has been much easier for grand narratives to tackle origins than conclusions. Where did castles originate, when were they first built, what processes drove their creation, and what were the patterns of foundation throughout the Middle Ages? Much less attention has been paid to the fate of castles, the later part of their biographies: the end of their use as castles, subsequent abandonment, and later use of the site into the modern period. It can be challenging enough to create narratives of architectural developments and changing social uses of castles before weaving in explanations for why some fell out of use and others continued to be lived in or were adapted. It does not fit easily into the popular arc of the castle story, which in Great Britain begins in the 11<sup>th</sup> century; saw great variety in design, complexity and sophistication in the 12<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup>, and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries; and was followed by rapid decline and steady abandonment from the 15<sup>th</sup> century onwards. This is aptly summarised by archaeologist M W Thompson (1987a, 205) who wrote

It might reasonably be expected that the foundation of a castle would have attracted more attention than its demise. The dramatic physical changes caused by the construction, and its substantial costs in labour and materials, were likely to be recorded by the chronicler and clerk; the slow physical decay, often imperceptible in a lifetime, and the collapse of a ruin were hardly likely to be regarded as worthy of notice.

This paucity of documentary material regarding castle abandonment, disuse, and destruction has cast its shadow over castle studies, but it is a situation which archaeological investigation can remedy.

Discussing the fate of an individual castle is more difficult than speculating on its origins. The form, layout, and location of a castle all give clues as to its function and creation. The landscape context offers insight into the castle's link with the local community and economy (for an example of this see Swallow 2016). All this can be done without the need for invasive and expensive excavation. In contrast the remains of a castle – whether ruins or earthworks – leave open many possibilities as to its fate. It could have been



abandoned and left to decay; it might have been attacked and irrevocably damaged; maybe it was dismantled when the owners moved somewhere else; it could even have been dismantled on the orders of the king. In these cases, it is absolutely imperative to delve deeper into the archaeological record. Chapter 3 'Methodology: Mapping destruction' will address these issues in full and outline the ways in which information from excavations and the various types of survey can be used and how to differentiate slighting from other forms of destruction.

While this thesis will focus primarily on the act of destruction, the choice not to destroy a site is often just as important. Kelly DeVries (2008) highlights a difference between the way invaders and conquerors treat a land: as invaders have no intention of staying there is no need to mitigate their actions; whereas should a conqueror inflict too much damage it will create bitter resentment and undermine their own rule. Britain saw relatively few invasions during the Middle Ages by DeVries' definition, with most conflicts tending towards rebellion or attempted conquest. What this means is that the cases where destruction was used are even more significant because the person perpetrating the act had more factors to consider when deciding whether to destroy a structure or leave it intact. The purpose of destruction caused by a raid in a foreign country, such as a *chevauchée*, differed from that inflicted on the property of a vanquished foe. Therefore, the decision to carry out slighting may carry important social meaning which can be examined through the archaeological record.

### **1.5 Defining slighting**

The Oxford English Dictionary (Simpson & Weiner 1989, 704) offers several definitions of slighting: 'the action of levelling (ground); the action of razing or demolishing; the action of treating with disdain, disregard or indifference; the action of glossing over'. All except the third are considered by the OED to be obsolete. The meaning that remains in common use places emphasis on the social dimension of a slight, while archaeologists and historians usually interpret castle slighting as utilitarian. This suggests a narrow understanding of castle slighting would be to oversimplify the phenomenon. Throughout history, destruction has been a tool of different social groups for different reasons; slighting is one aspect of this and one which demands further investigation.

The OED gives the earliest documented use of the word as 1613 (Simpson & Weiner 1989, 704), and medieval texts usually refer to destruction

in terms of buildings being ‘thrown to the ground’ or variations on this theme. For example, clause 8 of the Assize of Northampton (Fig. 1.2) issued in 1176 used the phrase ‘*justitiæ provideant quod castella diruta prorsus diruantur et diruenda bene prosternantur* [let the justices see to it that the castles which have been destroyed are utterly demolished, and those which are due for destruction are razed to the ground]’ (Stubbs & Davis 1913, 178–180; EHD II trans. Douglas & Greenaway, 446) when dictating castles that had been held against the king must be destroyed.<sup>1</sup> As a post-medieval invention, the term



Fig. 1.2. The Assize of Northampton in 1176 which ordered the destruction of castles held against Henry II. British Library MS Royal 14 C.II, f.157v.

<sup>1</sup> Though the documents recording these events are written in Latin the terms they use differ from the descriptions of destruction used by Roman authors to describe the act of punitive

'slighting' might give the impression there was a standardised behaviour in this act – that the purpose, meaning, and impact varied little. One of the most important aspects of the archaeological evidence is that slighting varied from site to site; it could range from utter destruction of a site to a token act of demolition. A castle might be reused and repaired afterwards or might be abandoned and the ruins left to be robbed out by the local community. Slighting incorporates a spectrum of activities, meanings, and gradations of destruction, and the term can be used to refer to all of these, rather than being absolute.

Defining what is meant by slighting, especially in a succinct fashion, is a problem that few have successfully tackled. Publications on castles often exclude glossaries, and even when they are included 'slighting' is typically overlooked as in the past it has not been of concern, as discussed in the Chapter 2 of this thesis. Some definitions provided include 'deliberate destruction of castle fabric' (Johnson 2002, 185), 'to inflict sufficient damage so as to render [a castle] unfit for use as a fortress' (Friar 2003, 271), 'to destroy a castle's defences to a greater or lesser extent' (Coventry 2006, 10), 'the process of rendering a castle useless to prevent its further use' (Hull 2011, 157), and 'deliberate destruction of fortifications in order to render them indefensible' (Hislop 2013, 248). The causes are so varied it is as challenging to distil as it is to explain why castles were built; generalisations can be made but will not hold true for every case. Johnson, Coventry, and Hull specifically mention castles, whereas Hislop broadens the definition to fortifications, thereby including town walls and urban defences. Hislop's definition is problematic as the notion of indefensibility implies there was a military imperative to the act where this has not been demonstrated. Similarly, Friar and Coventry place heavy emphasis on the military role of the castle. These fail to take into account the important social aspects of castles, so an alternative definition is required.

Lila Rakoczy encountered similar issues while writing her thesis on castle slighting in the English Civil War. The definition she settled on was 'The non-siege damaging (during times of conflict) of high-status buildings, their immediate landscape, their physical remains, and/or their contents' (Rakoczy 2007, 10). Importantly the definition includes the landscape and recent trends in

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house destruction. Roman authors tended to use terms such as *diruere* and *subvertere* meaning to "make fall apart" and "topple from the base" respectively (Roller 2010, 121). This separate discourse shows that each culture had a specific understanding of destruction even if there was no single term for it.

medieval archaeology have sought to integrate our understanding of castles with their impact on the medieval landscape (Creighton 2002; Liddiard 2005; Creighton 2009; Fradley 2011). Rakoczy's thesis was written during this development and her definition pushes slighting beyond the walls of the castle. The difference of emphasis on 'high-status buildings', as opposed to fortifications, has the benefit of including destruction when it encompassed the non-military aspects of castles. It also acknowledges that slighting was not restricted to castles; for example, under this definition a religious house deliberately damaged during a conflict could be considered to have been slighted. The phrase 'times of conflict' implicitly excludes changes to a structure brought about by remodelling. This provides a good foundation for a definition, but arguably an attack on a castle culminating in its capture might result in damage without a siege taking place. Damage caused by a siege or assault to take the castle was carried out for different reasons to slighting, and under different circumstances though still times of conflict. Instructions to slight castles are documented and while they do not survive for every case examined by this thesis the intention is important: slighting was a deliberate act rather than an overflow of siege activity or a spontaneous event. Therefore, a further iteration is put forward by this thesis:

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*Slighting is the damage of a high-status structure, its associated landscape and contents to degrade its value.*

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The degradation or removal of value is the key motivation behind slighting: it a deliberate act and is intended to prevent a form of use. This incorporates military, social, and administrative uses. A castle might be damaged to undermine the owner's authority, their ability to govern, or to prevent it from being used militarily. The act could be token, such as removing a distinctive feature of the building; it would not impede the castle's day-to-day functioning but the damage would be symbolic of the owner's status having changed. Or indeed the destruction might be near total, removing any value at all to the owner. The intention to remove value also excludes 'damage' caused when a building was remodelled. Under those circumstances, the value of the building lies in its remodelling; the change to the structure does not remove its value but increases it.

Importantly this definition is not restricted to castles. The understanding of how destruction is used reached through this thesis can be applied to other chronological, geographical, and social contexts. While the archaeology of castles is often an archaeology of the elite, destruction can affect or indeed be carried out by all levels of society. The definition of slighting is deliberately broad so that it can be transferring to other situations. For example, though it has very rarely<sup>2</sup> been described as such, the damage to religious houses and their contents during the Dissolution was a form of slighting as the purpose was to remove their value as centres of religious power and authority.

I have come across at least one use of the term 'decrenellate' (Inglis 2012, 30); while this offers a pleasing counterpart to the concept of licences to crenellate it suffers from the drawback that it gives the reader the notion it involved simply removing the battlements from a castle. Equally, while the term 'defortification' is sometimes used it has the very specific meaning of dismantling fortifications as opposed to other elements of the castle, such as the landscape. Not only do such terms restrict slighting to a particular form of building, but as this thesis will demonstrate, slighting was not exclusively focussed on a castle's defensive structures.

## **1.6 The archaeology of slighting**

Archaeology has an important role in understanding slighting and the state of our current knowledge and how this study can contribute to it is explored further in Chapter 2. Not only can it identify destruction events not recorded by often patchy medieval documentation, but it challenges those cases where records indicate slighting took place. The glib way in which slighting is typically discussed suggests two things. First, there is a desperate need for an in-depth study of slighting. General texts discussing castles are often dependant on reference to a handful of sites to support the narrative, used in almost an anecdotal fashion (Johnson 2002, 14), thus obscuring the underlying data. The understanding of slighting has not progressed even this far. Therefore, it is possible for this thesis to establish the narrative of slighting in England, Wales, and Scotland and to do so using empirical data. Secondly, it is not appreciated

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<sup>2</sup> Masinton (2008, 253) notably used the term in his contribution to a volume titled *The Archaeology of Destruction*, but it is certainly not widely used to describe destruction during the Dissolution



what is involved in slighting. There is a common preconception that dismantling something was an unskilled job (Rakoczy 2007, 256). The logic is that it is quicker and easier to destroy than to create, so it is an unskilled task. Accounts from the English Civil War clearly demonstrate this was not the case, with large teams of workers involved. The same can be extrapolated to the Middle Ages, albeit with less detailed records; for example, with Henry II sending his chief engineer to dismantle Framlingham Castle, discussed further in Chapter 4.3 (Renn 2012–13, 202). The archaeological evidence addresses the inadequacies of the available documentation and allows us to reach a nuanced understanding of slighting.

The study of standing buildings has much to offer castle studies and can provide information not available through excavation (Morriss 2000). Rakoczy (2007) skilfully used buildings archaeology to identify which areas of castles had been picked in the English Civil War and to question the long-held assumption that many castles were slighted using gunpowder. This was a productive approach for her period of study but makes up only a minority of the evidence used in this thesis. The reason is the additional centuries of decay, intervention, and reuse has meant evidence of slighting from the medieval period in standing buildings is often obscured. Once masonry structures survive the first few decades intact as the building settles it can take centuries for weathering to bring the structure to the brink of decay (Heyman 1995), but decay they do. Castles in use during the Civil War had been maintained to some extent in the intervening period, mitigating the effect of weathering. Some of the sites examined in this study were slighted as early as the 12<sup>th</sup> century, meaning that unless they were repaired by a subsequent owner there is a much greater period for the elements to reduce the castle further. As a result, excavation reports provide most of the data used in this study. The sites are a mixture of masonry construction and earth and timber structures. Both combined symbolism and militarism as ‘temporary campaign castles apart, timber castles no less than stone ones were residences of the land-owning class, and the institutions of chivalric life were developing by 1100 at a time when timber castles were flourishing.’ (Higham & Barker 2004, 349).

Slighting has been examined to some extent in Germany where the act is called ‘*schleifung*’, (Diefendorf 2008; Hannes 2009). The *Sachsenspiegel*, a 13<sup>th</sup>-century legal document, imposed some rules on slighting, including the

stipulation that building material could not be stolen (Atzbach & Lüken 2010, 88). The struggle to deal with the reasons for destruction is not restricted to the British Isles: while Jean Mesqui's *Châteaux fort et fortifications en France* (1997, 149) notes that a number of castles were destroyed in the medieval and post-medieval period reasons are only suggested for the latter period. This indicates that slighting is not yet considered separately in French castle studies. The methods applied in this thesis can be applied to other countries, and the conclusions can inform discussion in other contexts. This has the potential to have international significance.

### **1.7 Chronological and geographical scope**

This thesis examines castle slighting from 1066 to 1500 and encompasses England, Wales, and Scotland. The origins of the castle in England are almost as keenly debated as the emergence of the castle in Europe. The castles introduced by the Normans differed sufficiently from England's early medieval structures that contemporaries viewed them differently; however, burhs could share characteristics of private fortifications (Creighton 2012, 79–81). The fact the Norman castle was viewed as a separate construct – though in cases such as Exeter Rougemont (Devon) aping other architectural forms – provides a point to anchor the earliest part of this study. The end point poses its own problems since castles continued in use beyond the medieval period, though construction of 'true castles' ceased. Matthew Johnson (2002, 48) made the point that a castle built in the 12<sup>th</sup> century and used for generations was also a 13<sup>th</sup>-, 14<sup>th</sup>-, or 15<sup>th</sup>-century castle. Though archaeologists and historians alike typically describe a building in terms of when it was built, they were not static relics but continued to be the stage on which day-to-day life was acted out. The end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century is taken as the end for this study as the Tudor period saw significant changes in society and the use of castles in England and Wales, the primary focus of the archaeological evidence as will be discussed below. This means that significant conflicts are missed out such as the English Civil War of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Rakoczy's doctoral thesis examined the archaeology of castle slighting in the English Civil War, providing another reason to restrict this study to the medieval period.

As England is the largest of the three countries examined in this study, it naturally dominates the discussion. Both Scotland and Wales have important

examples of slighting which need to be examined. However, slighting in Scotland is under-represented in this study because the archaeological evidence is currently not sufficiently developed. For example, the first 50 volumes of *Medieval Archaeology* contain short reports on fieldwork at 492 castle sites across these three countries (Appendix 4). As seen in Table 1.1, sites in England make up more than half of the fieldwork, and sites in Scotland more than a quarter. Chapters 4 to 6 examine all the sites in England, Wales, and Scotland for which there is archaeological evidence of slighting. Fewer sites in Scotland are represented than Wales despite the disparity in number of sites investigated between 1966 and 2005.

Table 1.1. The country of sites represented in the short excavation reports of the first 50 volumes of *Medieval Archaeology* compared with the distribution of sites covered in this thesis.

Country	Fieldwork between 1966 and 2005	Proportion of total	Slighted castles in Appendix 1 <sup>3</sup>	Proportion of total
England	275	56%	41	69%
Scotland	137	28%	8	14%
Wales	80	16%	10	17%

What might appear to be evidence of slighting being less common in Scotland compared to England and Wales is at least partly caused by inconsistent source material. While Scotland is included in the discussion, the general paucity of evidence becomes more pronounced in subsequent chapters discussing slighting within an urban context and destruction and the wider landscape. In the former case, Roxburgh is the best example of a slighted castle associated with a town in Scotland but fieldwork on the site has been restricted. When discussing the medieval landscape there is even less information available for Scotland.

Some particularly notable cases of slighting are missing from the archaeological record. The campaign of Robert Bruce in the early 14<sup>th</sup> century (Cornell 2008) resulted in the slighting of Roxburgh, Edinburgh, and Stirling amongst others. These were major high-status sites, some of the most important in the country, but excavations have yet to uncover direct evidence of slighting. The excavations at Edinburgh Castle between 1989 and 1992 were the first since 1912. They focussed on the north and east sides of the castle and did not uncover evidence of the slighting carried out by Robert Bruce (Driscoll &

<sup>3</sup> This excludes the Isle of Man as it is separate from England, Scotland, and Wales.



Yeoman 1997). Instead the main direct evidence we have for the state of the castle comes from documents from 1335–1339, with one of the authors of the archaeological report noting that ‘It is clear from [the wardens’ descriptions] that Robert I’s instructions to slight the Castle had been well-executed’ (Grove 1997, 78). The lack of information about key sites severely hinders interpretation for Scotland. The purpose of this thesis is to use the archaeological evidence to understand how slighting was used. Though the absence of this form of evidence from the likes of Edinburgh does not mean the reports of destruction were unfounded, it does mean we are unable to assess to what extent the slighting took place. As such this thesis relies primarily on direct evidence for slighting. Ultimately, discussion of Scottish castles will enhance and enrich this study but at the present time there are significant lacunae in our understanding of these sites.

### **1.8 Thesis arrangement and research questions**

Chapters 1 to 3 provide context for the understanding of the act of slighting, establish the methodological processes underpinning the act, and examine the available secondary source material to establish how slighting enhances our understanding of medieval society. Chapters 4 to 8 interrogate primary source material to establish the archaeology of slighting addressing separate research questions explained below. Chapter 9 summarises the findings of this study and establishes future research priorities.

With the aims of this thesis established in Chapter 1, Chapter 2 ‘Literature Review’ explores the current understanding of medieval warfare, landscape studies, urban archaeology, and destructionology to place what follows in its context and demonstrate the ideas underpinning this study.

Following on from this, Chapter 3 ‘Methodology: Mapping Destruction’ gives an overview of the types of archaeological evidence used to examine slighting, exploring the drawbacks as well as what it can tell us. Slighting encompasses a range of activities, parties involved, motivations, and activity afterwards could vary. A typology is presented based on these variables.

*Research questions 1–3: What was geography of slighting? What was its chronology? And what parts of the castle were targeted?*

Within the scope of the geography of castle slighting, it is important to identify where these events took place. This study allows us to examine the role of border regions in castle slighting, and whether it was prevalent in particular regions. The importance of establishing the chronology of castle slighting is that it may be possible to relate the events to known conflicts. By combining the geography and chronology of castle slighting, this study is able to contextualise destruction and explore the changing nature of power in the Middle Ages and how it was expressed. The division of the castle into its constituent parts is because the buildings functioned in different ways and had different social and military significance. By identifying how these areas were treated we can approach a better understanding of how people in the Middle Ages understood and viewed castles.

These research questions span all of Chapters 4 to 6 which evaluate the archaeological evidence for castle slighting from sites in England, Scotland, and Wales. Chapter 4 examines evidence from great tower and mottes, Chapter 5 considers the evidence for the slighting of perimeters and gatehouses, while Chapter 6 interprets the evidence from intra-mural areas and synthesises key findings from the previous two chapters to reach conclusions about how castle slighting is manifested in the archaeological record.

This approach enables the creation of maps of slighting and some broad conclusions about the chronology of slighting based on the available dating evidence from each site. The limited discussion of castle slighting in the modern archaeological and historical literature tends to focus on ‘the Anarchy’ of the 12<sup>th</sup> century as a key period in castle slighting with the policy of destruction pursued by Robert Bruce in the early 14<sup>th</sup> century also featuring prominently. Material evidence, particularly ceramics, tend to allow dating to a broad period rather than a precise conflict; destruction deposits typically consist of rubble, burnt material, or soil and we are reliant on the artefacts contained within these contexts to date the events. As will be seen from Chapters 4 to 6 numismatic evidence is rarely found in these contexts, while ceramic material is much more common. There is also a risk that destruction contexts – especially within ditches – may have originally derived from elsewhere on the site and contain re-deposited material. Therefore, we should be cautious about restricting the

narrative of castle slighting to a handful of well-known conflicts. The information is discussed thematically, examining different areas of the castle. This demonstrates where the archaeological record is strongest, and how parts of the castle were treated. A holistic approach allows us to move beyond the pre-existing paradigm that slighting was a purely militaristic act, intended to deny an enemy the use of fortifications.

*Research question 2: What was the impact of slighting on the urban landscape?*

Chapter 7 'Urbanism and slighted castles' examines the link between slighting and urban centres, asking how did nearby communities respond to the slighting of a castle? When castles were attached to settlements, was the settlement itself ever deliberately included in the slighting? How were towns affected by the absence of the castle's economic force and role in administration? How were castle sites used after they were slighted? Was building material from the structure reused in the town?

The archaeological record of ten slighted castles and their associated towns is examined to progress towards an understanding of these issues. The role of the castle as 'midwife' is well understood (Thompson 1991, 146–147), with settlements often being deliberately created in association with a castle. The other side of the coin – what happens to a settlement when its castle is forcibly removed – has not previously been studied.

*Research question 3: What is the landscape of destruction?*

Chapter 8 'The lordly medieval landscape and slighting' examines the link between rebellion and slighting through the lens of the landscape. It asks how were elite landscapes treated within the context of slighting? Is there evidence for areas such as parks being deliberately attacked for their symbolism of lordly power, similar to one of the roles of castles? How was property treated in the politics of identity and power?

While castles remain a key theme, this chapter focuses on the broad definition of slighting by looking at high-status landscapes as well as items within high-status buildings. This is approached by examining three major conflicts: 'the Anarchy' (1139–1154), the Peasant's Revolt (1381), and the Glendower Rising (1400–1410).

## *Conclusion*

Finally, Chapter 9 'Creating chaos from order' brings together the key themes examined in previous chapters and critically assesses what the archaeology of destruction can tell us about medieval society, and seeks parallels in France where comparison might be most fruitful due to a shared culture. Beyond this it provides a research agenda for how castle slighting might be approached in the future and integrated into a broader study of the archaeology of destruction. Sites where further work is likely to uncover evidence of destruction will be discussed.

These are issues which have been addressed only tangentially by others, and never in full. While looking at slighting on a national scale can be informative, comparing sites demonstrates the variety involved in methods and motivations. Slighting can range from hurried acts of defiance to total destruction. It informs discussions of the idea of the castle and concepts of elite identity in the Middle Ages. Importantly this study progresses beyond the castle as a building to look at the landscape. These buildings were integrated into their surroundings: they were often the centres of administration and the economy. Examining how associated communities progressed once a castle was slighted offers insight into the lives of the greater proportion of medieval society, not just the elite. Each chapter of the current study progresses to a wider landscape, thereby encompassing a larger section of society.

Slighting is not simply about warfare, or castles, or the social elite. This phenomenon touched every part of society and cast a shadow far beyond the castle walls. This is why we should look at slighting.

## Chapter 2 – Slighting in its Archaeological and Historical Context

Destruction and damage have several, often very subjective, shades of meaning. Badly damaged is how ... Cathcart Castle, Glasgow, might have been described, having partially collapsed as a result of particularly heavy rainfall ... But one might easily imagine circumstances – particularly in warfare – in which a building in this condition might be described as ‘destroyed’.

Stell 2000, 275

### 2.1 Introduction

Castle studies has a rich historiography that contributes to how this thesis has been approached. It also sits within several other fields of study: particularly medieval archaeology, landscape archaeology, buildings archaeology, and the archaeology of destruction. Within each of these progress in research and approaches to understanding archaeological information shapes this study. This chapter explores how debates around the role of the castle, the meaning of medieval warfare, urban archaeology, and elite landscapes influence how this study approaches the topic of slighting. It also establishes the current state of knowledge in these areas, their strengths and weaknesses, and how this research will fit into these existing structures.

### 2.2 Castle studies

There was considerable antiquarian interest in castles from the 16<sup>th</sup> century onwards, notably John Leland’s *Itinerary* which detailed the state of hundreds of castles. Leland’s work in particular is noted for its numerous descriptions portraying an image of castles in a state of neglect and decay. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century the likes of G.T. Clark and Ella Armitage were driving forces behind the study, introducing an academic approach to the subject of castles (Hulme 2012–2013, 231). For most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century a military orthodoxy dominated the subject, and aspects such as changes in design were explained in terms of military imperative and as responses to improved siege techniques. D.J. Cathcart King in *Castellarium Anglicanum* gave a summary of the various roles performed by castles and gave pride of place to the military aspect. He wrote a mere six lines on ‘aesthetic and symbolic’ facets, 26 on administrative uses, and 147 on ‘warlike employment’ (King 1983a, xvi–xx). Military interpretations held

sway, but the methods to reappraise such theories had been developed in previous decades.

Charles Coulson's 1974 paper on 'Structural symbolism in medieval castle architecture' marked the beginning of the rise of an approach placing greater emphasis on social aspects of castle architecture. It had previously been assumed that licences to crenellate represented an attempt by the monarchy of England to exercise control over castle building, suggesting an overall plan in the distribution of castles. However, Coulson's research (built upon by Philip Davies 2006–2007) has brought to light a number of factors indicating this was not entirely the case, and the accepted orthodoxy today is that they were closer to a badge of royal favour than a legally binding document (Goodall 2011, 7–9). Patrick Faulkner's (1958, 1963) work on planning and domestic layouts in the Middle Ages laid the foundation for further work identifying social structures within castles. Such interpretations are most effective on buildings that survive substantially intact. While excavation can recover a building's footprint, analysing standing remains involves less speculation and results in more emphatic assessment of access routes (Speight 2004, 8). As a result, the most effective studies of social space within castles have been carried out on surviving great towers, particularly that by Pamela Marshall (2016) where they are typically referred to as 'donjons'. Therefore, this approach is unlikely to be effective on many slighted castles as remains are often fragmentary or even buried.

While recent castle studies have approached the castle as a multifaceted structure – with elements of display and arrangements of power, as well as military considerations – some aspects have lagged behind. Writing in 2004 Abigail Wheatley noted that castle architecture was still approached as essentially militaristic. Whilst castles are a type of fortification, this approach has been taken at the expense of others that might offer a more rounded understanding. By comparison Wheatley (2004, 1–2) pointed out that ecclesiastical architecture had long been 'understood as meaningful architecture', castle architecture lagged behind. Wheatley was correct in her assessment and she contributed to a range of authors who at the time were addressing this imbalance. Matthew Johnson's *Behind the Castle Gate* (2002, i) was one such work, writing 'Castles acted in part as stage-settings – as backdrops against which people played out roles of lord and servant, husband

and wife, father and son, soldier and gardener, in both everyday and ceremonial contexts’.

The relationship between the new approaches and older military interpretations has not been an easy one. The school of thought that has shed light on the social role of castles has been branded ‘revisionist’ (cf Speight 2004, 22–23; Platt 2007). In academic discourse a ‘revisionist’ approach can simply refer to one which re-examines existing data sets, but it is a word which carries negative connotations. The label may be derived from Charles Coulson (1994a, 86–137), who wrote a paper entitled ‘Freedom to crenellate by licence: an historiographical revision’, but there is a difference between revising something and revisionism. It demonstrates the guarded scepticism of the new approaches, which threatened to hold back castle studies. Colin Platt (2007) wrote a paper criticising the ‘revisionist’ approach, especially Coulson, for placing symbolism above militarism as the key factor behind castle design and building. He felt that ‘most revisionists today would prefer to see castles as fashion statements, and are reluctant to admit violence as first cause’ (Platt 2007, 97). Oliver Creighton and Robert Liddiard (2008, 161–168) wrote a response to Platt’s paper in which they proposed that treating military and social aspects of castles as mutually exclusive was a negative approach. It is healthy for established ideas to be examined and reassessed, particularly when new approaches to existing data may produce new and interesting results, unfortunately they are sometimes treated with suspicion. Platt was essentially advocating for a processual approach, eschewing the post-processual focus on social meaning, albeit not explicitly using these terms (McClain 2012, 137).

One author commenting on the change in historiography noted

In the past few decades many castellologists have moved away from ... largely ‘military’ explanations, emphasising castles’ roles as country houses and estate centres, and the opportunity for displays of status, wealth and individuality in their architecture. However, some castles of the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries were undoubtedly militarily significant.

Hulme 2012–2013, 231

The second sentence implies that issues of display and status have completely supplanted any military importance of castles, reflecting a greater unease in castle studies. The shift of emphasis can be demonstrated by considering how Cathcart King might have detailed a castle’s various functions for *Castellarium*

*Anglicanum* if he was writing today: it is unlikely he would feel six lines is a fair representation of our current understanding of castles as a social centre.

The concern underlying Platt's paper seems to be the marginalisation of martial concerns in castle studies: that approaches emphasising the social and symbolic role of the castle may completely override other interpretations. The tension between the approaches is unnecessary, as others have noted, and a castle can at once be a social centre, symbolic architecture, and a militarised structure. Indeed, the definition of a castle emphasises the variety of activities performed within its walls. As this study of castle slighting will show, martial concern and thoughts about social status often went hand in hand. Rather than creating equilibrium between social and military roles there was perhaps a concern the pendulum would swing too far in the other direction when challenging the establishment.

Contributions from English speaking authors can be found in the biannual journal *Chateau Gaillard*, which was founded after a conference in 1962 (Brown 1962–1963, 304). Its content shows how research priorities within castles studies have changed, with broad survey articles about ringworks and mottes in earlier volumes replaced by examples relating to communities connected with castles, their landscapes, and display in great towers, while the most recent volume looking beyond the military and residential roles of the castle to look at how it functioned in the economy. The Castle Studies Group, founded in 1987 by Robert Higham (Castle Studies Group 2012), publishes an eponymous journal every year as well as a newsletter covering the latest research, a regular bibliography of the latest publications, and organises several conferences per year. The newsletter is particularly useful for documenting investigations and maintenance of castles which might otherwise go unpublished. It is particularly impressive that *Chateau Gaillard* was founded just a few years after the first volume of *Medieval Archaeology* was published by the Society for Medieval Archaeology, itself launched in 1956; the editors at the time were cautiously optimistic that their journal would flourish (Harden 1957, 1). The spread of papers on castles across these three journals indicates the strength of the study, not to mention regular monographs published on the subject. Further demonstrating the healthy nature of castle studies, in July 2012



the Castle Studies Trust was established to further research in the subject.<sup>4</sup> The output of *Chateau Gaillard* and the Castle Studies Group suggest that castellologists may have at last moved beyond fighting yesterday's battle.

### **2.3 Medieval warfare and ritual**

While castle studies have reappraised the role of castles and no longer interprets them solely as military structures, their martial role is still an important facet. Even when architecture was not intended to be practical military, it was intended to evoke a sense of strength and power. Therefore, to understand the role of castles in medieval society, the role of warfare in this period must also be understood. In *War and Chivalry*, Matthew Strickland (1996, 90–91) touches upon the psychology of warfare, noting that buildings 'might be deliberately targeted precisely because they were tangible symbols of an opponent's status and prestige'. In this case, he was referring to damage inflicted on church property, but went on to add 'As with the destruction of castles or manor houses, assault on churches marked not simply the negation of an immense investment of capital and labour but a psychological blow which highlighted a lord's inability to defend his own'. For Strickland, damaging buildings was an aspect of war, but as this study will demonstrate it was often carried out after the fighting had concluded. As Strickland (1996, 88–89) notes, when stone-built churches or cathedrals were located near a siege they could be adapted for use as fortifications. When Hereford Castle was besieged by King Stephen's troops in 1140, they took over the cathedral and installed siege weapons on top of its tower. The churchyard was also adapted by the digging of a trench, resulting in the disinterment of bodies buried there (Shoemith 1980, 57–58).

It is likely there is a correlation between acts of destruction and rebellion against royal authority, an aspect of medieval warfare which is particularly relevant to this study (Strickland 1996, Chapter 9). Rebellion was not an uncommon feature of Anglo-Norman society and has been examined further in *Rulership and Rebellion in the Anglo-Norman World, c.1066–c.1216* (Dalton & Luscombe 2015), an edited volume covering events such as 'the Anarchy', the revolt of 1173–1174, and King John's struggles with his barons. Strickland

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<sup>4</sup> This part was written in late 2012, at which point I was one of the Trust's donors. In July 2015, I joined the Trust's board, and in their short time as an organisation their work has already influenced the content of this thesis, specifically in the case of Pleshey Castle.

argues rebellion was one of the main ways in which the baronial class could influence the policy of the king, partly explaining why rebellions frequently happened. However, rebellion was an act that challenged the established order, attacking the Anointed of the Lord (Strickland 1994, 56–57). Challenging the king's authority was therefore challenging that of God, which is part of the reason King John was able to appeal to the Pope to overturn *Magna Carta*.

As assaulting a castle could be costly in men, siege warfare accrued its own traditions regulating its conduct. Agreements were sometimes negotiated to avoid an assault, such as the garrison agreeing to surrender if support did not arrive within a time limit agreed with the besieging force. This benefitted both sides as the defenders were spared the possibility of being weakened through starvation, while the attackers did not have to face the perils of assailing a castle's walls. Importantly, the garrison needed to gain permission to surrender from their lord. The *Gesta Stephani* recounts the garrison of Plympton Castle in Devon secretly arranged their surrender to King Stephen. Though the author was royalist his description of the garrison as 'utter cowards' leaves the reader in no doubt that breaching the traditions of warfare was a despicable act (Speight 2000, 269–274).

From the narrative of the *Gesta Stephani* issues of authority were evidently important in 12<sup>th</sup>-century England. When Robert of Gloucester rebelled against King Stephen it was with the claim that his oath to his father must take precedence; the Plympton garrison failed to gain authority to surrender so were vilified; at Exeter the garrison was shown mercy by Stephen because they had not previously sworn to serve the king and in holding the castle were carrying out their master's orders. From these examples, it would seem garrisons might be expected to be treated differently to their lords, but when the men of Faulkes de Bréauté held Bedford Castle in 1224 against Henry III it culminated in their execution. The circumstances, however, were different. Bedford was an isolated rebellion and though the king could throw the weight of his military behind the siege it held out against him longer than expected. This undermined his authority, so the garrison was made to suffer, and the castle demolished. Moreover, Faulkes de Bréauté had already escaped to France, so the execution of the garrison may be considered punishment in lieu of the rebel leader himself.

Evidently, a range of factors influenced the treatment of castles and their garrisons during and after sieges. A particularly interesting take on the sieges of the civil war between Stephen and Matilda was that ensuring surrender through blockade meant the fabric of the castles was intact. Taking control of these symbols of royal authority without bloodshed might have been seen as bolstering the claim to the throne (Speight 2000, 269–274). While this is an interesting theory, in the same paper Speight (2000, 269–274) puts forward the view that castles were a deterrent, likening them to a ‘Polaris missile, designed to be physically used only as a last resort’. The implication is a castle was such an obstacle a siege might be more effective than an assault. However, in the context of the tension between military and symbolic interpretations of the castle, both interpretations could be applicable without coming into conflict. Taking a castle peacefully would avoid loss of life and retain the power house intact.

#### **2.4 The archaeology of destruction**

Within this thesis destruction often leads to abandonment, or at least disrupted use of a site. While the study of destruction as a phenomenon is a relatively recent occurrence, the archaeological study of abandonment and its deposition processes extends back to the 1960s (Cameron 1996, 3–4). Theoretical discussions have considered the difference between how artefacts were deposited in everyday contexts and during abandonment processes. Normal deposition involves ‘discard or loss’ or deliberate deposition, but when sites were abandoned ‘usable cultural material’ would be included in the deposits (Cameron 1996, 3; Schiffer 1976, 33). There is a recognition that abandonment may have been a destructive event, with a deliberate closing of the site as is the case with Anasazi pit structures where the roofs were deliberate burned on their abandonment (Lightfoot 1996, 168). Destruction has long been a part of archaeology: excavation itself can be considered destructive, whilst Pompeii and Herculaneum, two of the most famous archaeological sites in the world, were preserved through a natural disaster (cf. Cunningham 2011). The focus of this study, however, is human agency for destruction, and the understanding of this has progressed significantly.

The 21<sup>st</sup> century seems to have marked the beginning of an interest in destruction phases in the archaeological record, and how such events impacted

the societies that experienced them. In 2006 The University of York hosted the *Archaeology of Destruction Conference*, an inter-disciplinary discussion exploring themes and meaning relating to acts of destruction. Organised and chaired by Lila Rakoczy, the wealth of material brought to the conference shows that while destruction as a social phenomenon may not often be discussed there is a significant amount of research potential. Destruction is a pan-historical phenomenon, not restricted by geography or society, and the programme of the conference and content of the subsequent publication reflects that. While the 2008 publication of the conference proceedings mentioned the destruction of castles it was restricted to the English Civil War and the fire at Windsor Castle in 1992 the conference itself included talks by Matt Edgeworth on how the destruction of Bedford Castle in 1224 preserved the site and another by Michael Fradley on Welsh sites (Rakoczy 2006; 2008, 1). The implication is that this is an issue beginning to come to the fore in castle studies, but on which a great deal of information may be stored in unpublished archives. Fradley's paper challenged the assumption that when burning or abandonment is discovered at medieval sites in Shropshire almost by default it is assumed to be have been the result of Anglo-Welsh conflict (Fradley 2017, pers. comm.), showing it remains imperative to challenge established narratives and avoid over simplifying situations in interpretation.

Since 2006, Rakoczy organised a session on the archaeology of destruction at the Theoretical Archaeology Group at Columbia University in New York in 2008. The Centre d'Étude des Mondes Antiques (CEMA) at the Université catholique de Louvain hosted an international round table in 2011 entitled "Destruction: Archaeological, philological and historical perspectives". Whereas the 2006 conference concentrated on historical archaeology, the 2011 round table extended the discussion into the prehistoric period, showing the study of destruction in one context can inform discussion in others (CEMA 2011).

There seems to be a trend towards a better understanding of destruction. Mentioning "destruction" and "archaeology" tends to conjure up images of ancient sites in modern warzones, under threat of bombing or other man-made horrors. Destruction is now understood not just as a challenge of conservation but another aspect of the archaeological record. What is particularly important in this new study of destruction – 'destructionology' as Rakoczy (2012) has

dubbed it – is that it is multi-disciplinary. Archaeology plays an important role, perhaps the pre-eminent one, but synthesising approaches from other fields helps form a better understanding.

It is especially important for this thesis to understand how medieval society viewed destruction. Contemporary depictions of sieges and warfare (albeit not slighting) can be found in the Bayeux Tapestry, and while it was addressed in contemporary sources, it is instructive to look elsewhere for insight (Stell 2000, 275–277). As Geoffrey Stell notes, destruction was not always a complete act, and medieval literature rarely distinguishes between a building that has been razed to the ground and one where select areas have been targeted. Approaching castles as an outward expression of lordly power offer a means to analyse their social role. An act of destruction could in effect be a very prominent act of disfigurement. Professor Patricia Skinner (2015) in her work on disfigurement in the Middle Ages primarily concentrates on the visibility of facial wounds and their role in punishment. When used on a criminal the message was unambiguous, but how facial disfigurement in a nobleman – for example incurred in battle – was viewed by peers is more difficult to ascertain. She challenges the notion that battle scars were a sign of honour and bravery, noting the absence of a heroic scarred warrior from medieval literature such as *Beowulf*, and suggests they would be a source of shame, going on to note ‘Moreover, his shame was often linked to his social status—the higher a man’s social standing, the more damaging (and costly) an injury to him would be.’ (Skinner 2015).

The similarities are plain. A wound might heal but leave a scar; a broken tower might be repaired, but the building break would be evident. A scar might disfigure, reminding peers of a colourful past; a ruined tower would take long to repair, and recall the act which led it to be in that state. The logical extrapolation is damage to a castle – to a lord’s property – was to wound the owner by proxy. Perhaps that is one reason the repaired great tower at Rochester Castle (Kent) stands out; in 1215 it was held against King John who undertook a lengthy siege to capture the fortification, and in doing so undermined one corner of the great tower. It was rebuilt, but with a rounded corner, contrasting starkly with the three original square corners (Brown 1969, 14–15). The obvious building break restored the integrity of the building but was also a highly visible reminder of the siege of 1215.

## 2.5 Approaches to slighting

While the understanding of castles has moved on from the primarily military view of the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century to include other considerations such as symbolism and aspects of power, authority, and identity, the act of slighting a castle has remained framed in terms of military imperative: a castle was slighted so it could not be reused in conflict. This narrow and absolute understanding of slighting does not accurately reflect how it was used in the Middle Ages. As discussed in Chapter 1.5, the slighting covers a spectrum of destruction – from the complete devastation of a site to token damage – and also complex social reasons for carrying out the destruction which defines slighting.

A measure of the interest in slighting and how it has been approached can be gleaned from the glossaries of books on castles. Not all volumes have glossaries, amongst the most important studies that do without one are *Allen Brown's English Castles* (1954, 1977, 2004), M.W. Thompson's *Decline of the Castle* (1987b), and *Rise of the Castle* (1991), Coulson's *Castles in Medieval Society* (2003), and John Goodall's *The English Castle* (2011). To take two examples of those with glossaries, Creighton's *Castles and Landscapes* (2002) and Tom McNeill's *Castles* (1992, 2006) both omit the term 'slighting', indicating it was not a significant area of study. On the rare occasion slighting is mentioned it is done so in military terms. The glossary of *Castles: A History and Guide* by Brown (1980, 188) defines its purpose as 'to render indefensible'; Adrian Pettifer's (1995, 326) *English Castles* gives a more detailed description but the opening sentence explains slighting as 'The process of rendering a fortification untenable to prevent its future use'. Meanwhile, Jim Bradbury's *Companion to Medieval Warfare* (2004) did not contain an entry for slighting though the term was used in the book.

Johnson (2002, 185) began questioning this purely military explanation of castle slighting in *Behind the Castle Gate*, and seems to be the first author to provide a non-military definition of it in his glossary: 'Deliberate destruction of castle fabric'. Slighting referred to both castles and town walls, and Johnson (2002, 173) explained the social importance of their destruction by drawing parallels with events in Europe:

Private strongholds were a real and symbolic threats to the new Renaissance state; city walls symbolised political independence,

and the destruction of such walls represented the subordination of the city rights to that of the nation state.

He also touched upon an important theme – the act of demolition was not restricted to the buildings but affected the landscape. At Kenilworth, one of the most commonly used examples of a high-status castle landscape, the vast lake was drained (Johnson 2002, 174).

The issue of slighting was a minor aspect of Johnson's overall theme, and was greatly expanded upon by Rakoczy in her PhD thesis *Archaeology of Destruction* (2007). Both Johnson and Rakoczy focussed on slighting in the aftermath of the English Civil War in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, but the principles they laid out (particularly Rakoczy) apply to the medieval period. As mentioned earlier, Strickland suggested the deliberate destruction of ecclesiastic buildings and the ravaging of land carried several layers of significance, which he termed the 'psychology of destruction'. However, it seems to have taken time for the importance of the idea to be recognised, as demonstrated by the fact that much of the literature related to castles treated slighting as a militaristic activity. The psychological approach to understanding medieval warfare offers the opportunity to move on from the military versus symbolic debate as it recognises a fusion and symbiotic relation between the two (Speight 2004, 23). These ideas show small signs of developing, for example when a 2007 English Heritage research report on Framlingham Castle noted the destruction of the castle in the 1170s was 'a punishment for rebellion' (Alexander 2007, 17). Similarly, in 2012 Creighton (2012, 61–62) observed that while building a castle was a statement of lordship, dismantling or damaging it could be an equal and opposite statement of lost prestige. Too often, however, the subject is not approached critically enough.

The aim of this study, therefore, is continue in the established trend of looking at castles in their landscapes. It is an approach that has the potential to redress the balance between the canon of well-known castles and those which are less well known. While only a minority of castles were slighted, it may prove informative to examine how the damage incurred to a high-status building in this manner influenced the surrounding area. As centres of administration, it was not uncommon for towns to form around castles; if a castle was removed from the centre of a community it might be expected that it undergoes significant changes. The psychology of destruction was not restricted to castles as

religious buildings were sometimes treated similarly. This approach offers an opportunity to unite military and social explanations in the understanding of castles. On top of this, the castle can be fully integrated with the landscape and community for which the rule of their lord was a way of life.

## **2.6 The archaeology of medieval towns**

Chapter 7 will examine how castle slighting affected associated towns, so it is important to establish what evidence will be available for this assessment. Approaches to excavating in historic towns were developed in the 1960s, while a report on behalf of the Council for British Archaeology's Urban Research Committee on the state of urban archaeology the following decade declared 'Until 1970 there was no archaeological work in Scottish towns' (Heighway 1972, 22, 26). Urban development threatened the archaeological record of many historic towns. The assessment of the same CBA report was that of 906 historic towns in England, Scotland, and Wales 511 were considered under threat and 159 of those risked being lost to the archaeological record within the subsequent 20 years (Heighway 1972, 30). While over the previous years more attention was being paid to urban archaeology, it focussed primarily on the Roman period and ignored medieval deposits (Biddle 1968, 109).

A further research report commissioned by the CBA in the late 1980s demonstrated progress in urban archaeology, and showed a corpus of information had been created over the intervening years. In fact, it had progressed to the state where the editor suggested 'paradigmatic shock' was needed to transition from 'exploration and information-gathering' to 'interrogation of the findings according to comprehensive and persuasive models' (Schofield 1987, 1). This applied to the discipline as a whole, and while medieval urban archaeology had improved there was still a tendency to focus on the 8<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> centuries rather than the 12<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> (Palliser 1987, 54). This means that while information is available on the impact of castle building in towns, such as the destruction of buildings on the site and the diversion of streets, less is available on how towns changed when castles were removed (Palliser 1987, 58). The topic of urban castles was allocated an entire chapter in the CBA report, summarising the state of knowledge at the time and presenting key statistics which help frame further research. For example, the kings of Scotland founded 33 burghs before 1286 and all but two were adjacent to



castles (Drage 1987, 130). In 1992 English Heritage launched the Extensive Urban Survey project covering the whole of England. It produced a valuable resource, summarising towns' archaeological resources and historical development (Historic England 2016), which was extensively used in Chapter 7. The implication is that had this thesis taken place 40 years ago it would not have been possible to tackle the topic of urbanism and the castle in a satisfactory manner based on the available evidence. The proliferation of studies since then means we are now in a position to examine the impact of castle slighting on a town, taking into account the role castles played in the administration and economic life of urban centres.

Urban defences were not ubiquitous amongst medieval towns but are common enough to merit discussion here. Relative to castles, medieval town walls are a poor relation in terms of the amount of published material on their study, as they are 'Seen to fall somewhere in between architecture and archaeology and carrying something of a military stigma' (Creighton & Higham 2005, 15–16). While castles have been the subject of innumerable monographs, overview studies, and detailed analyses, such publications are far less common for urban defences though they have been the subject of research and investigation. In light of this, county Historic Environment Records are a valuable resource, as can be seen later when discussions of Leicester and Pleshey use evidence held in the respective HERs. The inadequate publication and synthesis of research was highlighted by Kenyon's (1990, 183) *Medieval Fortifications*, which suggested the fragmentary survival of circuits lacks the appeal of castles, and was reiterated by Creighton and Higham (2005, 15) in *Medieval Town Walls*. Within this group, England and Wales are better represented than Scotland, with England and Wales covered in two major works of the 20<sup>th</sup> century whereas Scotland has not had a monograph on its town defences. This is at least partly due to the fact relatively few examples from Scotland are known (Kenyon 1990, 184; Creighton & Higham 2005, 15, 18).

The underdeveloped research is demonstrated by the fact that in the 20 years between the publication of Turner's *Town Defences in England and Wales* and Kenyon's assessment in 1990, the gazetteer of 130 sites in the former work had become obsolete as it rose as high as 200 (Kenyon 1990, 183). Just 15 years later, upper estimates suggested there were as many as 211 fortified towns in England and little more than 55 for Wales, compared to

640 medieval boroughs in the former and 90 in the latter (Creighton & Higham 2005, 218). A 100% increase in 35 years shows just how rapidly the understanding of urban defences has the potential to advance given due publication. A case in point is that while *Castellarium Anglicanum* included town defences, it was always a peripheral concern to the primary content of each chapter, namely the castles and tower houses. While it gave an overview of the uses, distribution, and chronology of castles, town walls did not generally figure in these discussions (King 1983a). Even in 2015, numbers have continued to rise with the Gatehouse Gazetteer reporting there are 226 accepted urban defences in England, and 52 in Wales, representing a further increase for England and a slight decrease for Wales (Davis 2015). Alongside this, medieval town walls have commonly been treated as utilitarian structures, isolated from social context, though the work of Creighton and Higham (2005, 16) was aimed at redressing this balance and bringing understanding up-to-date and challenging long-standing assumptions such as the communal nature of fortifications. This reappraisal mirrors the work of Coulson in leading the revision of castle studies in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, moving away from militarism as the primary understanding of castles.

As has been the trend in castle studies, town walls are best understood as a blend of military significance and social meaning, rather than treating the two roles as mutually exclusive or one overriding the other. The implication for this thesis is that where slighting is considered in the context of town walls, both factors must be taken into account. The fact kings 'regarded themselves as overlords of all fortifications, whether castles or town walls' is reflected in royal control exercised over murage grants, allowing for taxation to support the upkeep of town walls (Creighton & Higham 2005, 249). Therefore, it is certainly possible town walls would have been slighted along with castles, particularly as the king was often responsible for ordering a castle's destruction. There is of course the issue that demolishing town walls – even partly – would have been a far more extensive task, and if carried out at the entrances which could be a focus of display risked disrupting trade, communication, and everyday life for the entire settlement. For all the parallels between town walls and castles a key distinction lies in who was responsible for them. Divisions between 'private' and 'public' have proven particularly problematic in relation to town walls: complicated by occasions where the monarch could order repairs (Creighton &

Higham 2005, 250). It remains that a castle would have been identifiable with an individual or family, whereas a broader range of people were concerned with urban defences, even if key personalities such as the monarch could exercise influence.

## **2.7 Landscape studies**

Urban archaeology underwent its formative years in the 1960s, around the same time landscape archaeology was developing as a discipline. It is possible to trace a pattern in archaeological investigations of castles, from being limited by the walls of the castle to the study of its broader setting. Salient features such as upstanding masonry and mottes formed the focus of initial investigations, then areas considered to be of lesser importance were investigated, most commonly baileys (Gerrard 2003, 110). Over time the area of study moved beyond the confines of the castle walls to look at how such buildings interacted with their landscape. Early studies examined the distribution of castles – most often to seek evidence of an overall building strategy – but it is only comparatively recently that the impact of the castle on its surroundings has gained significant attention (Creighton & Higham 2004, 5). In part this may be attributable to the tendency for castellologists to work exclusively within castle studies, thereby missing out on trends and methodologies of related subjects (Speight 2004, 3). The 21<sup>st</sup>-century trend towards a greater appreciation for castles and their relationship with the medieval landscape therefore paves the way to a deeper understanding of how the slighting of castles affected medieval society.

The expansion of castle studies to integrate them into the landscape builds on a strong tradition of landscape study in England, but one which had generally focussed on the post-medieval period. W.G. Hoskins has been described as the ‘father of the English landscape tradition’ (Johnson 2005, 112) and his work 1955 *The Making of the English Landscape* has likewise been praised as ‘seminal ... representing the founding of modern landscape studies’ (Creighton 2002, 5). While landscape studies developed to integrate various features – examining the emergence and development of medieval villages, looking at religious houses in their settings – the castle generally remained divorced from its surroundings. For instance, when establishing the need for the study of castles and their associated landscapes, Creighton pointed out that

castles fall outside the remit of the Medieval Settlement Research Group (2002, 5). A decade on, and while manor houses, moats, churches, ditches, and other assorted landmarks are understood by the group as being part of the medieval landscape, castles are still conspicuously absent from their research framework (Medieval Settlement Research Group 2007).

As the 'revisionist' school gained influence within castle studies appreciation of the non-military role of castles progressed beyond the confines of the buildings themselves. Individual features may carry meaning – such as heraldic shields on gatehouses – and the overall structure may reflect the power structures within the castle. On a larger scale, castles are inextricably linked with their landscapes. The link has usually been interpreted in military terms, such as exploiting high ground; however, careful examination of the distribution of castles in England shows many sites were overlooked by higher ground and that choosing a site along key transport routes was more common. The relationship between a castle and its landscape is two-way: as a castle could act as a centre of a manor or even a larger unit of administration, a settlement could organically grow around it. On the other hand, a lord might deliberately found a market town near his castle (Creighton 2002, 1).

The issue of castles and landscapes was brought into sharp focus by the case of Bodiam Castle. While Coulson examined the practicality of its ostensibly military architectural features, a study carried out by the Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England considered the earthworks surrounding the site, including its moat. A 'contrived landscape' was revealed, in which the visitors' approach to the castle was carefully managed (Taylor, Everson & Wilson-North 1990, 155–157; Everson 1996). Bodiam has been a crucial site in understanding the link between castles and their landscapes and had a similar role in understanding the 'designed landscape' in the Middle Ages in general. For the first time the conscious effort to shape the medieval landscape was recognised (Creighton 2009, 5–6). It continues to repay research efforts into the landscape setting and through building survey to better understand the use of space within Bodiam and appreciate castles as complex structures (Johnson 2017)

Though there are over 1,500 castles in England, most discussion revolves around a core group labelled the 'canon of castles' (Johnson 2002b, 15). This is not entirely unexpected since a great deal more is known about

Portchester Castle (Sussex) for example, which is an impressive standing structure and was under royal control for nearly 500 years, than Liddell Strength in (Cumberland) which survives only as earthworks, though there are several references in contemporary documentation. Castles that have survived above ground to some extent are more likely to attract academic attention; in general, these are the ones which were owned by the most powerful amongst the elite. In the words of Philip Barker and Robert Higham (1992, 11, 17), 'Without exception, the only remains of timber castles are earthworks, so masonry remains dominate not just the public imagination but the field of castle studies'. As a result, there is a tendency to overlook those castles belonging to the lower strata of the social elite (Speight 2004, 25). While sites such as Bodiam may be useful examples, for conclusions to have good foundations they need to be based on as broad a set of sites as possible. Because of the time and effort involved in excavation, landscape study has proved particularly useful for looking at a greater number of sites and those which are otherwise overlooked, as is the case with landscape survey at Caus Castle (Shropshire) led by Michael Fradley (Castle Studies Trust 2016).

'Of absolutely central importance to any understanding of the 'designed landscape' concept is the idea of control over nature – of order from chaos in order to fashion an environment that was visually appealing and somehow 'tasteful' ' (Creighton 2009, 2). The implication of this statement is that the act of destroying a building or unravelling the hard work of establishing a designed landscape was an act of returning chaos to order. Through this the perpetrator exercised their control over the person previously responsible for the landscape. In the words of Strickland

The ravaging of the enemy's countryside was the most common manifestation of medieval warfare, and arguably the most fundamental of all its forms .... it consisted of an assault on the material and psychological basis of an opponent's lordship, achieved by the seizure or destruction of the central components of his landed wealth.

Strickland 1996, 259

Strickland relates the destruction wrought on land and buildings during war to the concept of *ira et malevolentia*, that challenging the king's authority incurred his wrath. In the 1950s the work of Marc Bloch on emotional behaviour in the medieval period was influential in its field. For Bloch people of the Middle Ages were 'emotionally unstable' and emotion inhibited reason (Bloch 1961, quoted in

White 1998, 127). Yet the attack on the landscape was often a considered and deliberate attack as it would damage an opponent's authority and ability to resist. That may have been the message Henry I wished to convey when he fired a town in France during his war with a duchy (Strickland 1996, 89). Acts of destruction were not the sole reserve of the king, and when the Welsh prince Madog ap Llywelyn rebelled against English rule in 1294 he captured Caernarfon and set fire to the castle and walled town and began demolishing the town walls (Brown, Colvin & Taylor 1963a, 377), '*demolientes muros*' as recorded in the *Chronicle of Walter of Guisborough* (ed. Rothwell 1957, 250). As the new capital of north Wales under English rule the damage inflicted on the town was significant in undermining Edward I. The castle was not yet finished, though may have been defensible; perhaps more significant than the fact it was a fortification was the investment of prestige Edward I had put into the castle and town as the intended capital of Wales.

Studying castle slighting involves several archaeological fields and often documentary research, drawing on a wide range of source material. This approach allows this thesis to quickly advance our understanding of castle slighting and contribute to wider studies of medieval archaeology.

## Chapter 3 – Methodology: mapping destruction

And here it should be noted that documentary evidence is not always reliable; many contemporary statements of total destruction ... are grossly inaccurate .... Again and again ‘totally destroyed’ was found to mean simply damaged.

–Toy 1955, xvii

### 3.1 Introduction

This study investigates the archaeological evidence for the slighting of castles during the medieval period. The key methodological challenge posed is identifying the archaeological signature of slighting and this can be differentiated from other forms of destruction, whether through human agency, natural decay, or erosion. Once this is established it is possible to determine how many castles provide archaeological evidence for their slighting. From the resulting dataset it is possible to characterise the phenomenon, establishing how and why it was used, to map instances across England, Scotland, and Wales, and establish a chronology of castle slighting. Archaeological source material will be used to establish the nature of slighting, whilst historical evidence will provide additional context and in some cases corroborating dating evidence. Once slighting is examined within the castle, the research will examine how the removal of an embedded castle affected the development of urban centres. The thesis will then consider the wider use of destruction in the medieval landscape, examining how elite landscapes were treated during conflict, and use castle slighting to draw analogies and arrive at an understanding of the role of destruction in the Middle Ages.

### 3.2 Torches, picks, and spades: means to an end

Before we can go in search of slighting, we need to understand how it was carried out to be able to identify its signature. Slighting encompassed a series of processes: the issuing of orders, inflicting damage on a building, and the later use of the site. The order itself is important as it reflects the intention of the perpetrators and marks it as a deliberate act, rather than spontaneous destruction caused by a military force during a siege. However, orders are not represented in the archaeological record, and this thesis therefore focuses on instances where instructions to slight a castle were *carried out* rather than

ignored. Even when such orders to slight a castle were followed, the activity took various forms and could range from the complete levelling of all standing buildings to a token reduction in height of curtain walls. The case of Caerlaverock Castle illustrates some of the activities involved. It was probably founded around 1280 – built on a new site but replacing Caerlaverock Old Castle a short distance to the south east. The demolition of the new castle was ordered in 1312 and again in 1357, and partial demolition followed in 1570. Caerlaverock Castle's original fabric is still clearly identifiable, indicating that destruction was by no means total. It is therefore important to look beyond the written word and turn to the testimony of the archaeological record to understand slighting and how destruction was used in the Middle Ages. This is not without its challenges as Geoffrey Stell (2000, 278) notes 'it may never be possible to work out in precise detail the full extent of the damage that was caused to the castle during the vicissitudes of the fourteenth century' partly because later repairs and adaptation may have removed parts of the original structure – or even evidence of repairs – and would give the impression of more extensive destruction than caused by the slighting.

Slighting is not separate from destruction, but instead sits within a range of destructive processes that effect castles. They range from normal abandonment of a site and the gradual decay seen as a result, to catastrophic destruction caused by war. In between lie gradations where the two overlap; for example, damage incurred during war may not lead to immediate abandonment, but over time the castle may become redundant to another site in any case. Rather than differentiating between destruction and slighting, the challenge is to establish when a destruction context should also be considered evidence of slighting. The process begins with establishing what methods were used to slight a castle and what traces they would have left on the archaeology. The tools available in the Middle Ages dictated what kind of demolition activity could be undertaken. Shovels and spades could be used to break up earthworks (termed 'digging' in this thesis), along with deliberately filling ditches, or undermining structures. Levelling earthworks was a relatively uncomplicated task, with the earth from ramparts used to fill ditches. However, it was labour intensive so a completely level surface is unlikely unless a site was later ploughed. Mining was more dangerous and complex so professional miners were typically used when undermining a fortification. It could take two forms:



tunnelling underground and using timber props to support a gallery, then collapsing the passage to weaken the structure above or picking at ground level under cover of a canopy. The props were typically burned and so may be visible to archaeologists. Medieval documents record the use of mining, but it was typically only used late in a siege as both types of mining were dangerous (Wiggins 2003, 5–17).

Fire was a potential destructive tool albeit one which was difficult to control. It could melt lead, scorch stone (Fig. 3.1), and burn a castle's wooden components. It was most dangerous to timber structures, but even stone buildings had wooden components, particularly flooring and roofs. Contemporary accounts of medieval warfare show these methods were used during sieges. For example, an attack might try to set a palisade on fire, as vividly depicted in the Bayeux Tapestry where soldiers attempt to burn a tower on the motte of Château de Dinan (Jones 1999, 171). At the siege of Rochester Castle (Kent) in 1215 King John sent for 40 pigs so that they could be burned in

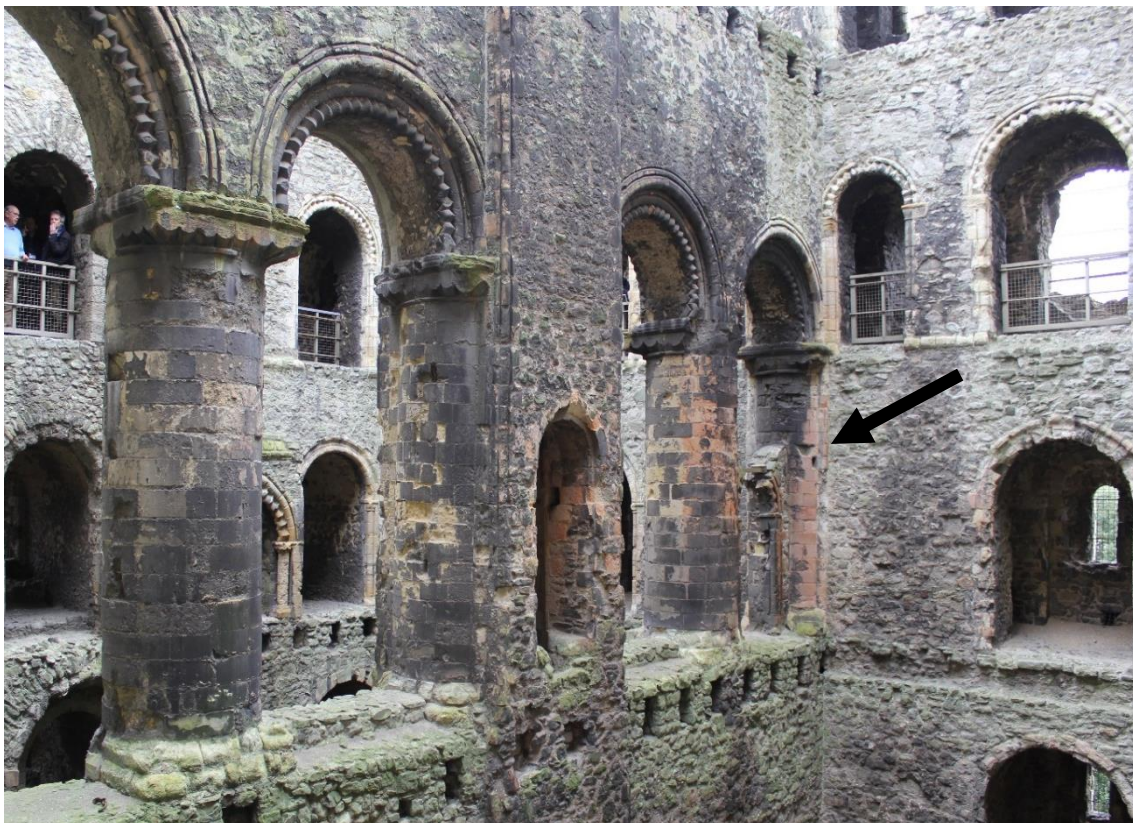


Fig. 3.1. The interior of the keep at Rochester Castle, at the level of the great hall. The pink stone at the end of the arcade (see arrow) marks an area affected by fire (Goodall 2006, 268; Peats & Drury 2009, 28, 60). Not only is fire damage evident in stone, but it may have been accidental rather than deliberate. For each castle considered in the next chapter the case for slighting will be examined. Photo by Richard Nevell.

a tunnel underneath the great tower, thus collapsing the tunnel and bringing down the wall above (Brown 1969, 14).

Picks could be used to dismantle walls (Fig. 3.2), wrenching facing stone to reveal the rubble core and leading to the collapse of the structure (termed 'picking' in this thesis). Each method leaves a different fingerprint which in some circumstances can be differentiated from generic demolition as discussed below.

Each of these of these methods required varying levels of resources. Burning could have been done relatively quickly and few people compared to picking, which could have involved large teams of people especially if efforts were being made to maximise the amount of reusable material. It would also have been much easier to slight a wooden castle than a stone structure as removing timbers or indeed burning them was a simpler and less skilled process than removing stone. On the one hand the ease might make it more likely for timber structures to be slighted, but the greater initial investment of time and money in stone structures makes them more valuable militarily and socially making their slighting more significant. Where a stone castle has been slighted,



Fig. 3.2. An illustration from the *Tschachtlans Bilderchronik*, a late 15<sup>th</sup>-century Swiss illuminated manuscript. It shows the slighting of Burg Landshut in Germany using axes, picks, hammers, and halberds. Ms. A 120 from Atzbach & Lüken 2010, 88.

it should be regarded as especially significant because of the resources needed to undertake such an operation.

### 3.3 Identifying slighting

Table 3.1 A summary of the different methods of slighting and the traces they leave in the archaeological record as discussed below.

	<b>Excavation</b>	<b>Standing buildings</b>	<b>Topographical or geophysical survey</b>
<b>Burning</b>	Charcoal, ash, melted metal, scorched stone	Scorched stone	n/a
<b>Undermining</b>	Rubble spread, facing stone/ashlar mixed in, possibly props from mine shafts. Survival of the shaft as a buried feature.	Rebuilding phase	n/a
<b>Picking buildings</b>	Rubble spread, mortar spread, limited or no ashlar/facing stone recovered	Rebuilding phase	n/a
<b>Digging earthworks</b>	Ditch filled in dump	n/a	Uneven mottes or ramparts

#### 3.3.1 Excavation

Evidence of each of the methods of destruction discussed above and outlined in Table 3.1 can be discovered through excavation. The most common areas for excavation are ditches because they are likely to accumulate deep deposits with a stratigraphy chronicling the history of the site. At Leicester Castle for instance, excavations of the ditch revealed a rubble layer (Fig. 3.3), evidence of the slighting of 1173 (Clarke 1956, 24–25). A small amount of medieval pottery was recovered from the fill but is not closely datable, so the dating for the event derives mainly from the castle's documented history as long as it is not contradicted by the archaeology. A brown sandy silt deposit indicates a period of slow filling through weathering, and a layer of stones and building material denotes the destruction of a stone structure. Several indicators are available to differentiate from decay or accidental collapse. Firstly, the absence of ashlar in rubble deposits might indicate that a wall was deliberately dismantled. If it collapsed due to poor workmanship, or indeed attack, it would be expected that facing stones would be included in the fill and less likely to be removed for reuse because they were damaged. In cases where the rubble represents a



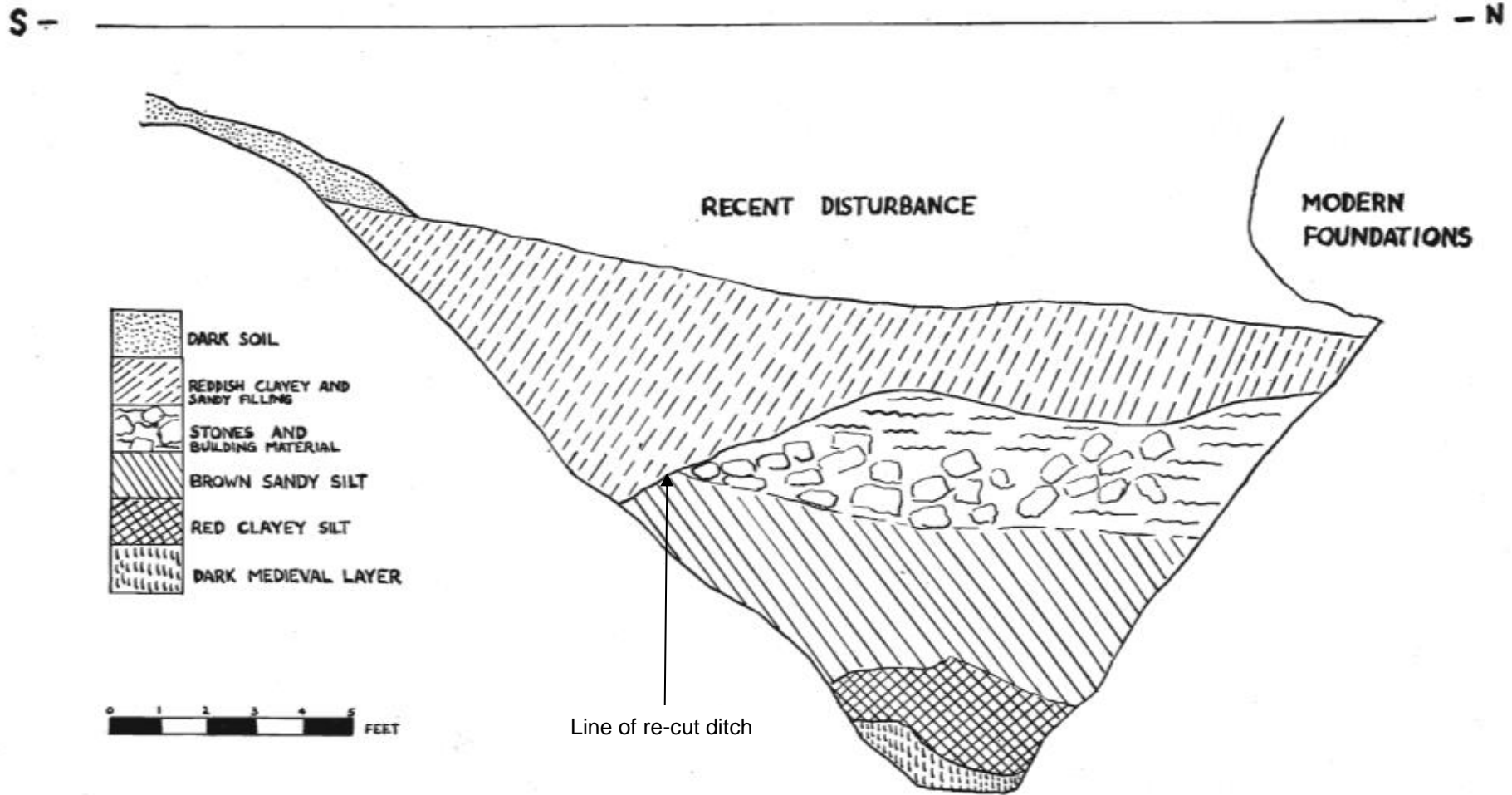


Fig. 3.3. A section through the ditch of Leicester Castle. The layer of stones and building material has been assumed to correspond to the order to demolish the castle in 1173. A recut was not noted in the original report but is marked here. Reproduced after Clarke 1956, 24.

more careful dismantling of walls, it is likely a valuable resource such as ashlar would be taken away and reused. There is the possibility of false positives if ashlar has been robbed out from a collapsed structure. Even if ashlar is buried and partly damaged through collapse, it would still represent a valuable source of building material for the local populace and as such might effectively be used as quarry. Such quarrying activity would be difficult to identify, but excavation reports should be searched for evidence of later intrusion into sites. Secondly, the rubble is likely to form a single discrete deposit. Where time has elapsed between one demolition context and another, allowing soil to accumulate, this would indicate collapse due to decay rather than deliberate demolition. This can be complicated when there was an initial slighting event, followed by periods of decay and collapse, perhaps including robbing which would also remove the ashlar from the fill. In such circumstances, other forms of evidence such as burning or any associated finds to date the destruction or demolition activity elsewhere on the site may be needed to fully understand the significance of the deposits. In the example of Leicester there is a single deposit with no ashlar, increasing the likelihood of slighting.

Of course, the demolition of a stone structure did not leave rubble only in the ditch, and evidence may be found elsewhere within the castle. It has been observed at archaeological sites that rubbish is cleared away from areas in use and collected in discrete places (Alcock 1987, 18–19). Extrapolating from this, while the presence of rubble is best understood in concert with other forms of evidence, in some cases the sheer quantity can indicate extensive demolition. If the rubble was a result of remodelling work, or the castle had continued in use, most of it would be cleared away. Rubble deposits can tell a complicated story, especially when they are extensive. At Dryslwyn Castle (Carmarthenshire), for example, the gatehouse of the town wall was slighted, with the ashlar removed along with the fittings for the gates themselves. The rubble overlying the walls was interspersed with soil contexts, indicating it had been deposited in stages; the conclusion by Caple (2007, 225) was that an initial phase of slighting was followed by episodes of robbing, resulting in multiple demolition contexts, but only one slighting event.

The presence of mortar spreads can be an important indicator of demolition activity but should be approached cautiously. A mortar spread might indicate a workman's area during construction activity. Equally it could also

indicate reusable stone was being cleaned off before being moved elsewhere. With both rubble and mortar the interpretation depends on its position relative to other features. A mortar spread overlying the remains of a wall would almost certainly indicate it had been dismantled. This would indicate a very deliberate act – not hurried demolition or even decay. A rubble spread in a courtyard may have been used as a makeup layer, so it is important to check its relationship to other features. If it overlies other structures, it is likely to represent a demolition phase. As with rubble, mortar spreads can be indicative of slighting rather the absolute proof and is best understood with other forms of evidence. Buildings are sometimes demolished to make way for new structures, so it is important to establish how this can be differentiated from slighting. One such example can be found at Wallingford Castle where the middle bailey contained two cob-built structures, at least one of which was a kitchen. They were in use for about 50 years before the ground level of the bailey was raised 2m by soil dumps. The cob structures were completely buried and had been at least partially reduced in height, as the tops of the walls showed no indentations for roof timbers (Christie *et al.* 2013, 183–194). Where available documentary evidence can add context, as is the case with Framlingham where a deep make-up layer corresponded to a documented incident of slighting (see Chapter 4). There is no such documented event at Wallingford, indeed the 13<sup>th</sup>-century date for the abandonment of the cob-built kitchen buildings does not appear to be slighting (Christie *et al.* 2013, 183–194). The event can be divided into two parts: the reduction of the buildings and the filling of the bailey. With the former, the partial reduction of a high-status building such as a great tower or the outer defences may be highly symbolic. For a service building, the reduction in height preserved here – robbing it of its roof – would have prevented it from being functional. It is therefore important to find other corroborating evidence. Are multiple forms of destruction used, and is there destruction elsewhere in the castle?

In rare instances mine shafts or galleries might be discovered, as was the case at Bungay. The difficulty is in establishing whether they were used as part of a siege or to slight the castle. Typically mines created during a siege will originate further from the outer walls of a castle than those created to slight it because greater distance gives greater protection from missiles but would have increased the labour involved in slighting (Rakoczy 2007, 81). The danger

involved and the need for professional miners is significant and means it would have been improbable for mining to have been used in the context of remodelling a castle. The method was too dangerous and would have limited the amount of reusable building material. It was therefore a method used when destruction of a site was more important than being able to recycle valuable materials.

Fire was used as a weapon against castles, and of course as part of domestic activities such as cooking, so to identify slighting as opposed to other activity the important factors are where the effects were concentrated and how extensive the fire was. Evidence of fire may be found both in ditches and within areas inside the castle, but care must be taken not to misidentify material discarded from hearths as evidence of slighting. First of all, the amount of burnt material found, whether charcoal or ash, gives an indication of the scale of the fire. A hearth or the remnants of a cooking fire would present smaller amounts of burnt material compared to the remains of timbers from a building, or a site-wide destructive event. Secondly, location is important in separating domestic activity or attack from slighting. Typically, fire used during an attack would be concentrated around the castle's perimeter. Hearths and cooking fires would be found in kitchens and great halls and burnt deposits in a ditch might represent rubbish from domestic activities or even an attempted attack. Larger-scale burning within a castle would indicate a structure was destroyed, possibly a deliberate act of slighting.

Accidental fire needs to be considered, much in the same way accidental collapse may be a factor for walls. Even a stone-built structure would use timber for floors and in the roof, but the use of stone drastically reduced the likelihood of an accidental fire as demonstrated by the introduction of brick as a building material to 17<sup>th</sup>-century towns in England; while fires still occurred in towns with brick buildings, it was far less common than in the medieval period when timber buildings were prevalent (Jones & Falkus 1990, 121). The implication is that fire within a stone castle is much less likely to be accidental than at a timber castle. Fire becomes more significant when it is found in unexpected places, for example if it is found within a stone building. When fire is concentrated within a building with little evidence of fire outside, this indicates the conflagration began within the building. In cases where fire is spread throughout a site, the intention is less clear. This could represent slighting that was indiscriminate but could

also indicate an attack which escalated out of control. This method differs from uses picks and spades in that it would have required comparatively little manpower and time and could potentially have left more of the structure intact. The use of fire therefore may have been indicative of a force hurrying to slight a castle.

Depending on soil conditions the effects of weathering can be drastic. Of the various soil types, clay soils are most resistant to erosion, whilst silt and sandy soil are most susceptible (Fig. 3.4). This provides a benchmark against which the fill in castle features can be measured. A clay rampart will erode to a lesser degree than one of the same dimensions built from sandy soil; so, if a thick deposit of clay soil is found in a ditch and a rampart is absent that might indicate the rampart consisted of clay and was deliberately deposited into the feature. What separates natural erosion from deliberate infilling is the depth of the contexts. A ditch that was filled as the result of a rampart eroding over an extended period will have a fill consisting of many contexts. One which has been filled deliberately is more likely to have a consistent fill, or a small number

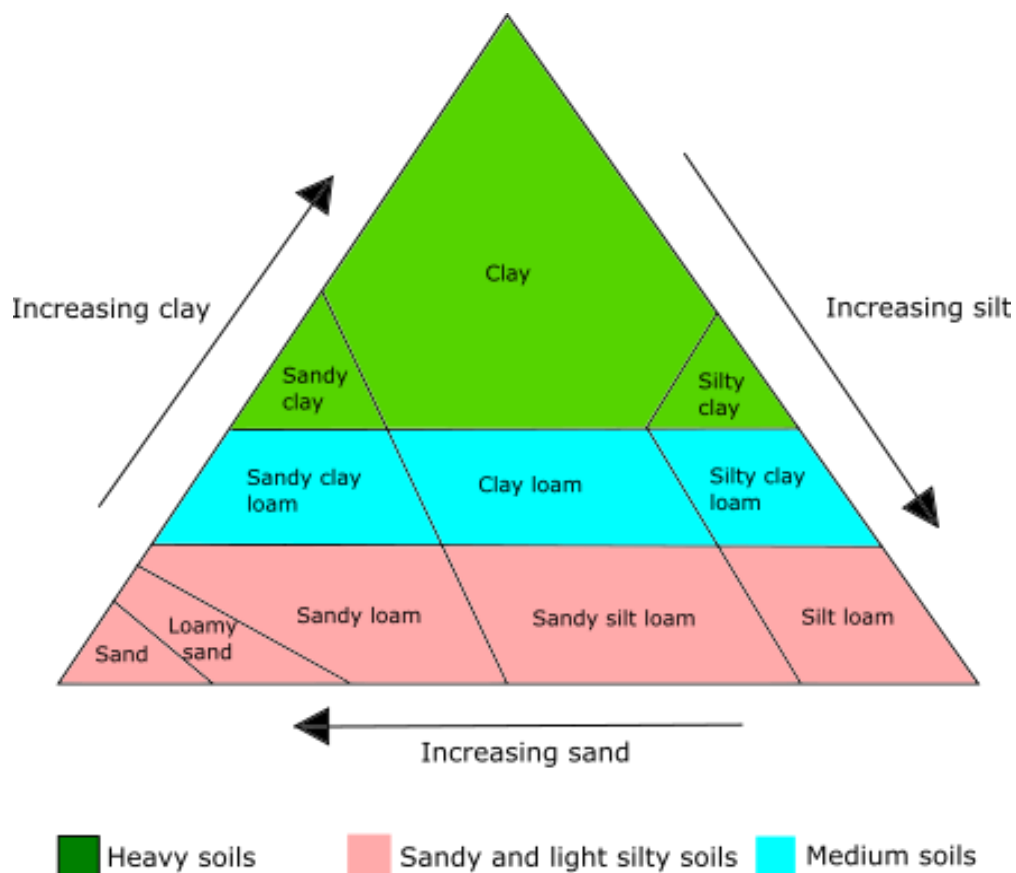


Fig. 3.4. Classifications of soil texture. Heavy soils are most resistant to erosion, whilst sandy and light soils are most likely to weather. From Defra 2005, 55.



of deep contexts. Barker (1993, 30) observed this type of fill is characterised by 'clods or unsorted stones'.

In some cases, it is possible to establish whether a motte has been truncated as illustrated by the case of Bedford Castle. Stone revetting was discovered at the foot of the motte (Fig. 3.5); it had been sealed by several substantial demolition layers, deposited when the castle was slighted in the early 13<sup>th</sup> century. The revetment ends abruptly, and the surface of the motte above the revetment is hollowed, indicating deliberate destruction as had the motte decayed naturally the surface is unlikely to have been concave. The section shows the side of the motte had been cut into before the contexts above were deposited. Bedford's motte was reduced in height by an estimated 4m (Baker *et al.* 1979a, 16). This would have removed a considerable amount of the pre-demolition archaeology on top of the mound and left it almost featureless. While the absence of archaeological finds on top of a motte may suggest it has been truncated, it is not definitive proof of slighting particularly if the excavations are only small-scale and may miss evidence elsewhere on top of the mound. On a small number of occasions the buildings on top of a motte would be removed, and the earthwork truncated to create a platform for a new

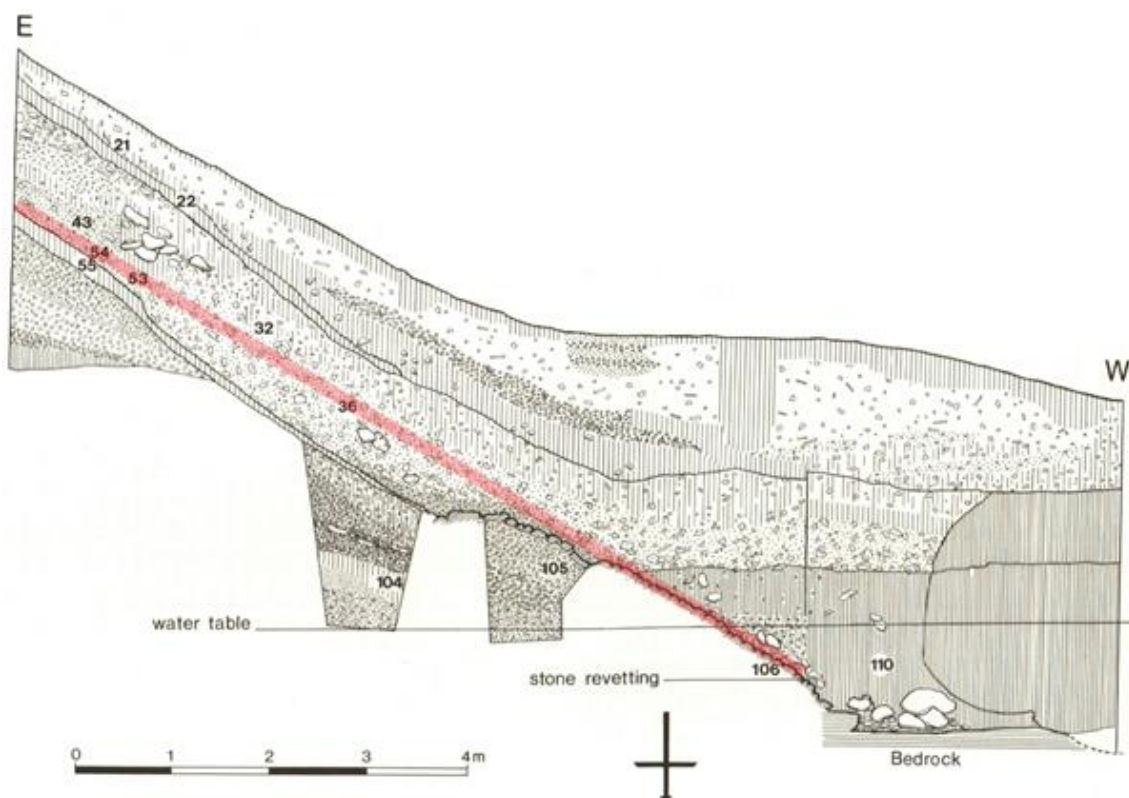


Fig. 3.5. The ditch and motte at Bedford Castle, showing the spread of rubble and truncated profile of the mound. (106) indicates the profile of the motte before it was damaged. The red line marks the extrapolated original surface of the motte; note the hollow extending up the revetment. Adapted from Baker *et al.* 1979a, 16.

and typically masonry structure. There are examples of this at Newcastle-upon-Tyne (Northumberland), and Gloucester (Gloucestershire) (Pounds 1990, 21–22).<sup>5</sup> This is largely an uncommon practice, but mottes that were deliberately lowered so that a structure could be built on top of them are more likely to have regular earthworks, whereas slighted mottes are more likely to have uneven surfaces and plans. This is abundantly clear from Groby's kidney-shaped motte.

It is conceivable that 'closing deposits' may be found at castles, though they are typically absent from slighted sites. The theoretical approach to closing deposits is that they may signify the end of the relationship between the inhabitant or owner and the structure, though as Gilchrist (2012, 229) observes these deposits are typically poorly understood for the late medieval period.

### **3.3.2 Standing buildings**

Like buried archaeology, standing buildings provide a record of activity on a site. Different styles of construction or different building materials can show where construction paused, where part of a structure was rebuilt, or where an annex once stood. Interpretation poses its own challenges. The phased plan of Castle Rushen's keep (Fig. 3.6) illustrates how different building phases can be identified. The first phase of construction was partly demolished as demonstrated by the way the corners survive higher than the rest of the phase. Had it been a break in construction the interface between phases 1 and 2A and 3.1 would have been smoother. For a high-status structure such as a great tower to experience some form of demolition early in its history is indicative of a deliberate act of slighting.

How do you differentiate between remodelling, such as heightening, from repair work? Furthermore, is it possible to tell the difference between repair work necessitated by slighting and other forms of damage? This is an important consideration as in some cases castles were rebuilt after they were slighted. The demolition of Framlingham Castle (Suffolk) was so important in 1174–75 Henry II despatched his engineer Alnoth to personally oversee the work, however it was rebuilt later that century (Alexander 2007, 16, 20). At Bothwell Castle (Lanarkshire) the partially demolished 13<sup>th</sup>-century great tower was repaired with a cross-wall in the 14<sup>th</sup> century (Rutherford & Malcolm 2011, 197).

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<sup>5</sup> Pounds suggests Bramber (Sussex) may also have had its motte deliberately reduced, but as noted in Appendix 2 weathering may also have been a factor.

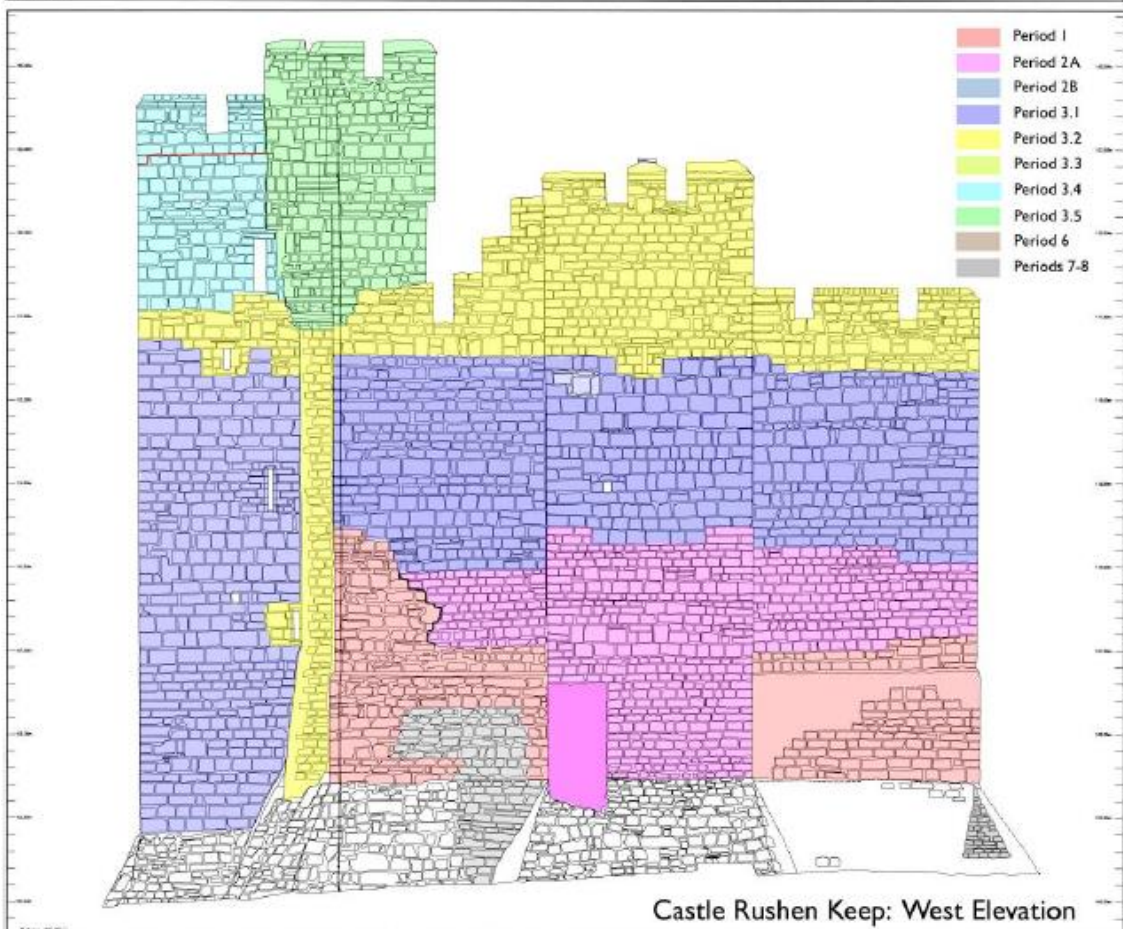
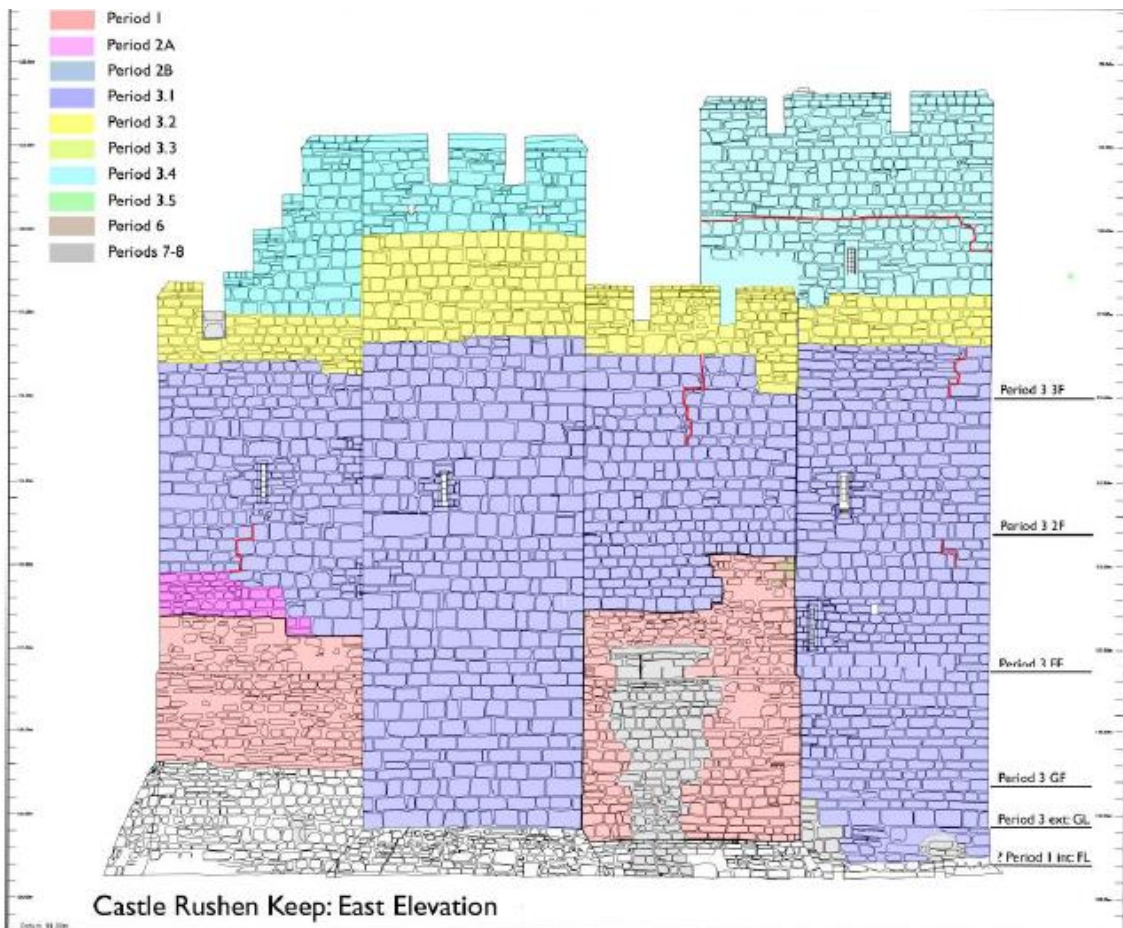


Fig. 3.6. Phased elevations of the east (top) and west (bottom) faces of Castle Rushen's great tower showing the levelled off period 1 work. Period 1 was dated to c1200, periods 2a and 2b after 1333 and 3.2 1330s to 1340s. From Drury McPhearson Partnership 2012, 43.

In other cases, such as Leicester (Leicestershire) and Ludgershall (Wiltshire), the later reuse of a castle may be used to infer that the building was put into a usable state.

One possibility is that the quality of the workmanship should be taken into account. The building break in the tower at Wolvesey Palace (Hampshire) marks a change in the quality of workmanship and suggests the later phase may represent a reaction to demolition carried out in 1156, one of the castles of the Bishop of Winchester demolished around this time (*Historia Anglorum* trans. Greenway 1996, 608–611; King 1983a, 194). Similarly, the work at Bothwell did not even attempt to reconstruct the tower in its original form. As a result, a structure that had previously been the social core of the castle became lower-status accommodation. Other factors such as dwindling funds may have dictated the quality of the build. In-depth surveys of standing structures are informative and can sometimes show where a building has been reduced in height and later repaired. In each of these examples the documentary evidence provides a fixed point to relate the evidence of rebuilding to. Unfortunately, without the contemporary accounts noting that they were slighted, the change in building quality would not be enough to confidently establish slighting. To take the evidence out of the context of the written material, the rebuilt corner of the great tower at Rochester Castle could be an indicator that the site was slighted, however from contemporary accounts we know the tower was undermined as part of a hard-fought siege (Brown 1969, 14), so categorically not an example of slighting. However, when found along with destruction layers the coincidence of the two forms of evidence provides a strong indicator of slighting.

As mentioned above, fire was one of the tools at the disposal of a group slighting a castle. This may be evident in the presence of scorched stone. Fire could be accidental, as happened at Wressle Castle (Yorkshire) in 1796 when the tenant tried to clear the chimney with a less than successful outcome (Brears 2010, 61–63). Scorch marks are easiest to interpret when there is dating material available through other sources, in particular when excavation finds evidence of datable destruction elsewhere on the site.



### 3.3.3 Landscape/measured/earthwork survey (topography and geophysics)

Earth and timber castles today survive only as earthworks, and some stone castles survive only as buried footings. The profile of a mound approximates a normal curve as it decays (Kirby and Kirby 1976, 233), while earthworks that experienced human impact have a different form. Unexpected breaks in an earthwork, or pitted areas such as those found at Buckton Castle in Cheshire (Fig. 3.7), may be taken as indicators of human agency – or occasionally animals. It would take a great deal of effort to completely level an earthwork, which is most likely why the motte of Thetford Castle (Norfolk) survives substantially intact (Fig. 3.8) though according to the Pipe Rolls for 1172–73 the castle was demolished (Baillie Reynolds 1949); the document records payment ‘for the custody of the Castle of Thetford from Palm Sunday until 15 days after Whitsuntide (Pentecost) before it was pulled down [*prosterneretur*], 72s’ (trans. Killick 1908, 19; *Pipe Rolls* 19 Henry II, 117). In the case of Groby Castle (Leicestershire) the plan of the motte summit differs from the circular or sub-shape typical of mottes in the British Isles. Instead it is kidney-shaped (Fig. 3.9),



Fig. 3.7. An aerial photograph of Buckton Castle. The pitting inside the castle is a result of 18<sup>th</sup>-century treasure hunting (Grimsditch, Nevell & Nevell 2012, 92). Photograph reproduced by permission of Michael Nevell.



Fig. 3.8. The motte of Thetford Castle is still a remarkable sight, demonstrating that slighting did not necessarily involve removing all trace of a castle. Photograph by Howard Chalkley, licensed Creative Commons Attribution, Non-Commercial No-Derivatives 2.0.

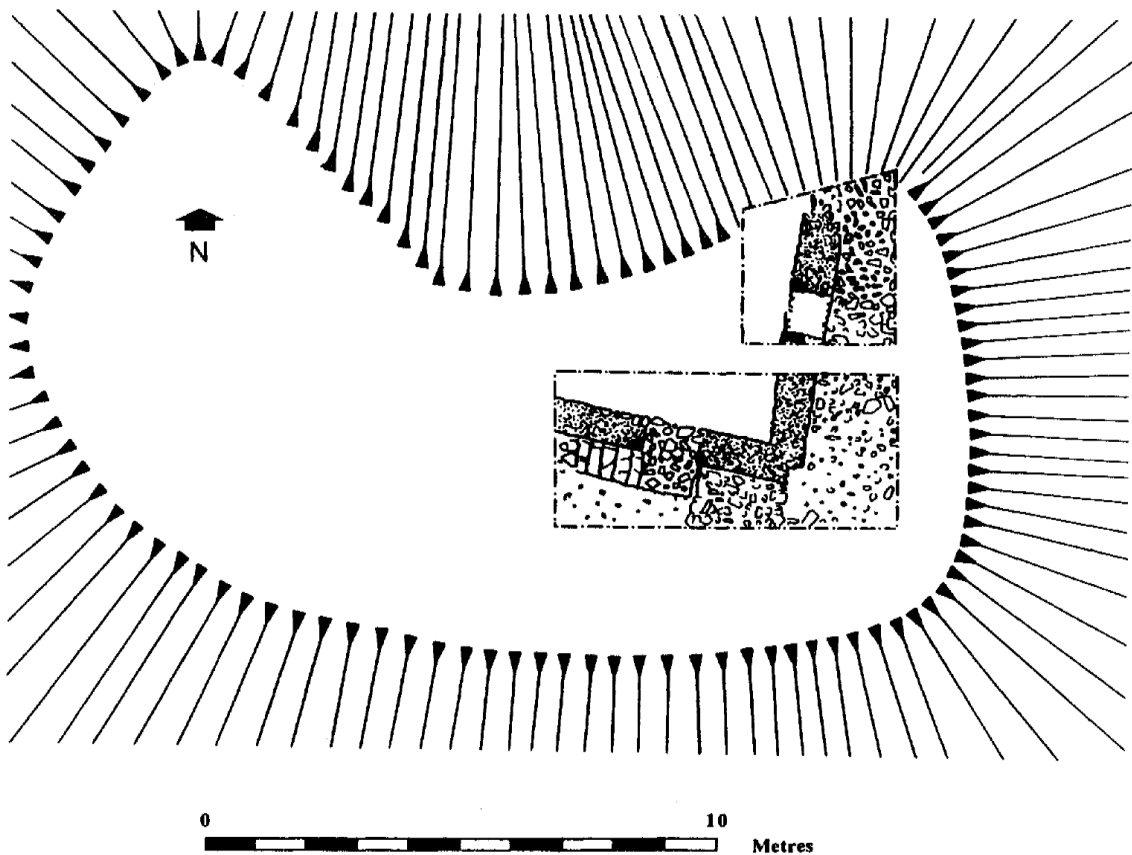


Fig. 3.9. Groby Castle's unusually shaped motte is the result of human intervention, thought to date from the castle's demolition in 1174. It would originally have been closer to circular and was built around an earlier stone building. Plan from Creighton 1997, 23.

though the mound was originally at least sub-circular given a stone building was found within the mound and it is unlikely to have projected from the side. Its current unusual shape has been attributed to the work of Henry II's men in 1174 when he ordered the dismantling of the castle (Creighton 1997, 22). Where humans have dug into an earthwork it often creates an irregular shape. Cases where castle earthworks have an irregular shape attributable to human intervention are likely due to slighting. Cases such as Groby give clear indication of human interference, but the context for this event is often unclear without excavation to provide some form of dating evidence. Therefore, earthwork remains which have not been excavated are only discussed where the evidence for slighting is compelling.

### **3.3.4 The missing witness**

Inevitably some forms of slighting will not survive in the archaeological record. In 1228 King Henry III gave orderd to reduce the walls of Barnstaple Castle (Devon) to a height of 10 feet, but the domestic buildings should be left untouched.

'Permittat autem quod Henricus de Tracy per visum suum de muris castri sui de Berdestap' tantum prosterni [overthrown] faciat quod muri illi remaneant altitudinis x pedum tantum [remaining only 10ft], ita quod ipse Henricus infra firmitudinem murorum illorum edificia sua et mansionem habere possit [domestic buildings allowed to stand]. Test rege apud Rading', j die Augusti.'

*Close Rolls 1227–1231, 70*

The castle survives now as earthworks, so it is not possible to assess the physical evidence for slighting. One aspect that would be particularly interesting to examine is whether battlements were frequently a target of controlled demolition because they were one of the outstanding features of fortified buildings, as demonstrated by the symbolic importance of licenses to crenellate (Coulson 1979; Wheatley 2004, 10–11). However, they are also the most likely part of a castle to fall victim to natural collapse. This was forcefully demonstrated in May 2012 when a magnitude 6.0 earthquake struck northern Italy, damaging the Rocca Estense and the Rocca Este. The upper levels of the Rocca Estense's towers and the machicolations collapsed (Burton 2012, 8). It may be unsurprising that the highest points were the first to come down, however, it does illustrate the point that in the Middle Ages is someone wanted

to partially demolish a castle attacking the tops of its towers or its battlements would have been effective. Ultimately it seems that this type of slighting will be impossible to prove in the archaeological record, the likelihood of it taking place notwithstanding. The best that could be achieved is to examine the fate of outer wall – those most likely to carry battlements and benefitting from their symbolism – as a proxy measure but ultimately this would lead to supposition.

It should be noted that whilst geophysics is a useful technique for establishing a plan of a site when conditions are favourable even a technique that is sensitive to areas of burning such as a magnetic survey have limited use for this thesis. This is because excavation would be required to confirm the results, meaning that at best it could be considered an indicator of slighting.

### **3.4 The landscape evidence**

Slighting offers an untapped possibility to improve our understanding of castles in the landscape. Modern scholarship has demonstrated that the imposition of castles on a pre-existing landscape such as an urban centre could create its own destruction event. It is now appreciated that castles sometimes lay within curated landscapes, sometimes with ornamental features or parks, effecting how the castle and landscape would be experienced together (Creighton 2009, ch 8). Examining what happened to the surrounding area once a castle was slighted will give an idea of how influential these structures could be. In an urban context the excavation of town walls can help understand whether the deliberate destruction of fortifications extended from the castle walls to the civic defences. Urban archaeology can also help to identify which areas of a settlement were used in certain periods, and what kinds of activities were carried out. A lime kiln near a town wall may indicate repairs after an episode of slighting, while a disused market might suggest that economic activity in a town declined. Where this information is available the growth or changing settlement pattern within a town can be mapped and related to key events including the slighting of a castle.

Lords could create towns and boroughs to exploit the economic activity within urban areas through taxation (Thompson 1991, 145). The construction of Beaumaris Castle provides an instructive example. In 1295 Edward I began building Beaumaris and an adjacent walled town on the island of Anglesey. Nearby was Llanfaes, a borough and established market town, and one of the



most importance centres of trade in Gwynedd (Letters 2007); competition for commerce from Llanfaes threatened the new town of Beaumaris so, to ensure the latter flourished, Llanfaes was depopulated (Taylor 2004, 5). This was a powerful reminder of kingly authority over the landscape. The implication for this thesis is that if a castle was slighted and its associated town shrank, a nearby settlement might benefit and take on the role of focal place. Indeed, it may be possible that once a castle was slighted the focal place was deliberately moved to a new site. Though the castle may not have been the key consideration in determining the fortunes of a town, it was likely a contributing factor.

### **3.5 Towards a typology of slighting**

It is the proposal of this thesis that there are three different ways to classify slighting: motivation; method; and extent. The motivation is difficult to establish without reference to the historical record, while archaeological investigation is integral to understanding the latter two. There are three categories in terms of how extensive slighting is:

- Not carried out – difficult to prove a negative, especially archaeologically;
- Partial demolition – some areas of the castle were demolished;
- Complete demolition – the castle was entirely demolished (extensive excavation required).

The first is infrequently discussed in this thesis because this study focuses on positive evidence of slighting. Castles where documentary evidence suggests slighting took place, but the archaeological record casts doubt on this could be a separate study. Sites that were completely demolished are uncommon, and such instances are striking. Partial demolition was usually sufficient to accomplish the aims of slighting, so sites that were totally demolished likely had a strong social element involved. The methods of slighting are reflected in the archaeological record and are discussed above in section 3.2; the methods are not mutually exclusive, and a combination may be used.

There are several reasons slighting might be undertaken (Fig. 3.10). In one scenario a hostile force has taken control of a castle from the previous owner. This can be through assault or perhaps the owner has been captured and their property confiscated. Alternatively, the owner of a castle decides to render a castle in a state that would make it unusable by an enemy. Because

castle ownership was a mark of prestige, this latter circumstance is much less common. There are, however, two notable scenarios where this approach was adopted: King John in the early 13<sup>th</sup> century and Robert the Bruce in the 14<sup>th</sup> century. Each adopted this tactic to hinder an invading force. There is a third circumstance in which a king orders his subject to dismantle a castle because it was built without permission, though this was also uncommon.

Castles are a key means of understanding power in the medieval period and how it was exercised because they 'are one manifestation of the longer-term archaeology of power and its negotiation' (Creighton 2012, 150). By examining the archaeology of castle slighting we seek to understand how medieval society interacted with these buildings and their role in the archaeology of power.

### **3.6 Conclusion**

King's *Castellarium Anglicanum* indexed some 1,440 known castles in England and 453 in Wales, excluding tower houses and artillery forts. A little over half of these sites have some contemporary documentation (54.3% in England and 41.7% in Wales; cf Appendix 3). To expect the contemporary documents to offer a full understanding of the nature of demolition in the Middle Ages is no more reasonable than to expect it to give a full picture of medieval castles as a whole. Even in instances where a contemporary source records the slighting of a castle, the extent of the damage is very rarely mentioned. Archaeology therefore has an invaluable role in ascertaining the character of this process, identifying evidence of demolition, and understanding the impact of slighting on the surrounding area.

With the theory behind slighting established, the next stage is to establish a corpus of sites which based on archaeological evidence have undergone slighting, either partially or extensively, during the medieval period. This has never been attempted and is an integral step in establishing the characteristics of castle slighting and mapping it chronologically and geographically as will be done in Chapters 4, 5, and 6. The benefit of this approach is that archaeologists examining a single site have not previously had a corpus of slighted castles with which to compare their investigations. Drawing together this information helps to test previous assumptions as well as draw new conclusions which would not previously have been possible.

Three approaches were taken to compile the published evidence: examining the short reports in *Medieval Archaeology*; undertaking a systemic and rigorous bibliographic search of county journals; and interrogating monographs and unpublished reports, all for details of destruction contexts at castles. The brevity of notes in *Medieval Archaeology*, due in part to the format of the contributions and the often-interim nature of such notes, meant that when destruction was mentioned details on how excavators made this identification were often missing. As such it was important to find more details reports where possible, though such notes often served as useful ways of discovering information. Unsurprisingly, the older a source is the less likely it is to include the trench-by-trench descriptions and plans and diagrams which allows close interrogation of the source material. Some journal articles, usually those from the 19<sup>th</sup> century though the quality varies, omit key information such as the location of excavations. This poses a significant challenge in interpretation, but I

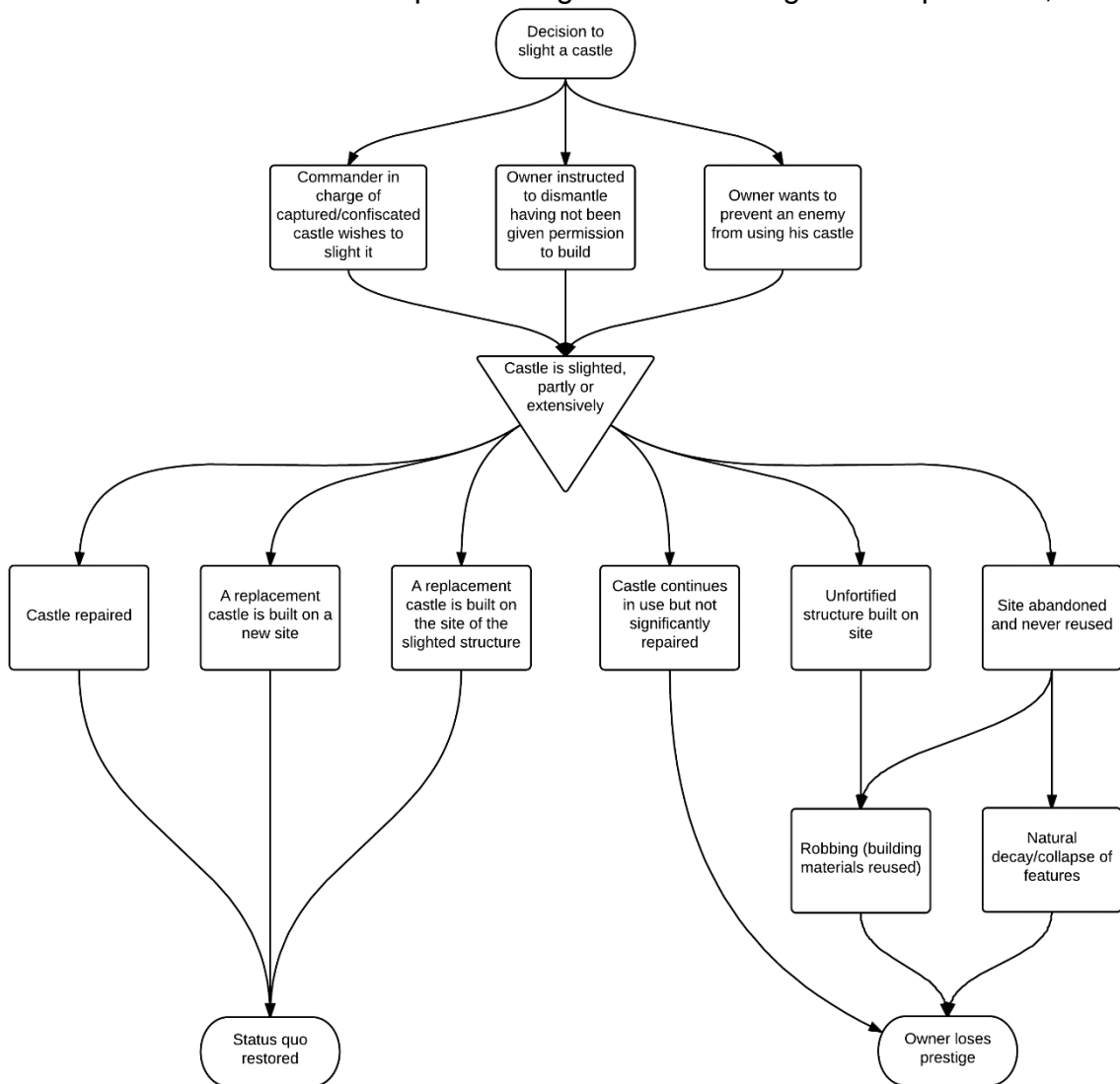


Fig. 3.10. Flowchart outlining the different processes involved in castle slighting.

was able to account for this vagueness in Chapters 4–6 by grouping areas of castles together so as long as it was possible to make reasonable conclusions about where a destruction layer was found it was still possible to usefully include the information in a discussion. Monographs such as those produced on Ludgershall and South Mimms and extended journal articles or special editions such as the volume of *Bedfordshire Archaeology* devoted to the excavations of Bedford Castle provided the most detail. Here the format of the sources allowed the original authors to include diagrams and extended descriptions and discussions. This has been especially useful for reappraising the source material. At the early stage of this study, the purpose of this literature survey was to establish where archaeologists had identified destruction. Throughout the literature, archaeologists were good at recognising evidence of destruction, and even in 19<sup>th</sup>-century sources written before the adoption of scientific methods in excavation writers often noted destruction events as evidenced by burning or rubble.

The United Kingdom has a strong tradition of local archaeology organisations conducting research going back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. As a result, beyond monographs and studies of individual castles there are dozens of series of journals covering archaeology on a county basis and this formed the foundation of the study. The net was cast wide to ensure that at this early stage sites were not ruled out when further investigation might uncover further evidence of slighting. Once I established a list of castles where there was possible evidence of destruction – burning, rubble deposits, robbing – I reassessed with one key question in mind: did the evidence reflect slighting as discussed in this chapter, or could it be attributed to other activities such as remodelling or decay? The aim was to base the analysis on sites which can confidently be described as having been slighted.

The anticipated outcomes of this study were ambitious: to develop for the first time a sophisticated understanding of the military, social, and symbolic roles of castle slighting in the Middle Ages; to map the phenomenon in time and in space; and to assess its impacts upon the landscape.

## Chapter 4 – Patterns of force: the archaeological evidence

### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter seeks to establish the chronology and geography of castle slighting and to examine how different parts of the castle were treated by examining the archaeological evidence in journals, monographs, and grey literature uncovered through excavation and survey. In doing so it is possible to challenge the existing assumption in castle studies that slighting was performed solely to prevent an enemy from using a fortification, as discussed in Chapter 2.3. As will be made clear, some of the most symbolic parts of the castle were targeted, an analysis which is complemented by the documentary evidence where available which paints a complex social landscape. Once it is accepted that destruction sometimes recorded in documents such as the Pipe Rolls was not as comprehensive as might be assumed from their broad statements, the issue at hand becomes to what extent castles were damaged.

To produce a dataset on which the discussions in Chapters 4 to 6 are based, I interrogated excavations, geophysical surveys, site plans, and analyses of standing buildings for evidence of slighting, the signatures of which are discussed in Chapter 3. In all, I found evidence that 60 castles in England, Wales, and Scotland which had been slighted during the medieval period. As the location for each of these sites is known it is possible to map them. This approach produces a survey of the archaeological evidence for slighting, however it has limitations. The form of slighting which reduced the height of structures, as documented at Barnstaple, is not represented in this dataset, while for some sites where there are contemporary references to slighting there has been insufficient archaeological investigation to establish the extent of the destruction. At other sites, for example Edinburgh Castle, extensive later activity obscures the evidence of slighting. This is therefore a study of the archaeological evidence for slighting, rather than an all-encompassing study.

For this chapter the sites are broken down into their constituent parts to examine how they were treated, and the methods used. While no two castles are identical, some features can be generalised and other are common enough

to be treated as a discrete group in the analysis. So, while mottes and great towers were not ubiquitous, these each have their own section because there is a wealth of evidence which can be discussed in relation to slighting. Ditches, ramparts, walls, and palisades are common features of castles, but so closely related that the fate of one is often linked to that of the others; if a wall is pulled down, any associated ditch will most likely have been filled at the same time. As such, these features are discussed together under the category of ‘outer defences’. Other structures such as halls and chapels are more difficult to discern from their remains. While excavators might put forward a suggestion regarding the use of particular structures, it is not always definitive. As such, these buildings are treated as part of the intra-mural area within the castle, encompassing the range of structures found within a castle which are not distinctive enough to form their own group. For the purposes of this study ‘entrances’ include gatehouses, gate towers, and barbicans; they are the main entrance to a castle site, rather than the actual doorways from the constituent parts of castle such as the hall. The sites discussed in this chapter are those for which the evidence of slighting is most compelling (Appendix 1). There are other castles for which the evidence is equivocal and so have been omitted (Appendix 2). This has been done to ensure that conclusions about slighting are not skewed by sites with weak evidence. Table 4.1 shows how often there was evidence that each feature of a castle was destroyed.

Table 4.1. Distribution of demolished areas in castles.

<b>Feature</b>	<b>Frequency demolished</b>	<b>Proportion of castles slighted</b>
Great tower	21	35%
Motte and associated features	17	28%
Perimeters	23	38%
Intra-mural areas	16	27%
Entrances	7	12%

Great towers and mottes were amongst the most frequently targeted aspects, indicating that symbolism may have been a significant factor in castle slighting. In part this may be because they are particularly likely to be the foci of excavations, so are disproportionately represented in the dataset. Additionally,

the presence of burning within a tower is more emphatic evidence of slighting than other forms of evidence. The focus on great towers is interesting as these structures combined the symbolic and military functions of a castle, arguably more so than the other features. The evidence will be fully discussed in sections 4.2 and 4.3 to establish whether this is the case. The effect of castle slighting on the landscape is addressed in Chapters 7 and 8.

After the initial overview of the chronology and geographical distribution of castle slighting, this chapter turns to the evidence for each of the 60 sites. The information is grouped by feature, with individual castles appearing in multiple sections where applicable. Each feature is introduced with a discussion of its role in the castle, while the section synthesises the information across each of the sites discussed.

## **4.2 Great towers**

The term 'great tower' – often synonymous with 'keep' or 'donjon' (King 1988, 188; Marshall 2016, 159) – refers to a particularly large or significant tower within a castle. The extent to which these structures could have been defended varies; the idea they were the last place of refuge during a siege is an outmoded concept (McNeill 2006, 45–46). While in the past castle studies have treated great towers as primarily military structures, considerable work has been done in reassessing these structures: they may have been used on ceremonial occasions, defensive deficiencies have been found, and their appearance of strength may have been more important than any intention for them to withstand attack (Marshall 2002a; 2002b; 2016; McNeill 2006; Gregory & Liddiard 2016). As a category of building they encompass a great variety in use and design, and resist generalisation. They varied significantly in size and design; many were rectangular, although others were circular or even polygonal. These structures can be found across England, Scotland, and Wales (Tabraham 1997, 45; Thompson 1991, 64–65).

When writing his report on excavations at Farnham Castle (Surrey), Thompson (1960, 90) remarked 'It is perhaps too readily assumed that stone keeps could not be demolished'. What prompted this was not only the ongoing work at Farnham, but a discussion with Renn who pointed out that the Pipe Roll from 1176–77 documented expenditure on 100 picks to take down the great tower at Bennington (Hertfordshire). This section provides quantitative and

qualitative data to support this observation and advance it: showing great towers were amongst the most commonly slighted parts of castle sites.

The closest to a catalogue of great towers in England and Wales is a list drawn up by Thompson (1991, 64–65). While a useful point of reference, it is not comprehensive. It covers 89 sites, split into three categories: hall-keeps, solar-keep, and round and polygonal keeps. England contributes the majority, with some examples from Wales, Scotland, and Ireland, though again not comprehensively. It excludes great towers built after 1216 and England’s 21 shell-keeps (Higham 2016) and there is no corresponding gazetteer for Scotland. With no definitive list of keeps across England, Scotland, and Wales it is not yet possible to establish how many were slighted as an absolute proportion. However, the archaeological evidence suggests that a significant proportion of great towers were deliberately destroyed during the Middle Ages; they are listed below.

Table 4.2. Castles with slighted great towers.

<b>Name</b>	<b>County</b>	<b>OS grid reference</b>	<b>Date slighted</b>	<b>Method of destruction</b>	<b>Reference</b>
Ascot d'Oilly	Oxfordshire	SP302190	Late 12 <sup>th</sup> century	Picking	Jope & Threlfall 1959
Bedford	Bedfordshire	TL053497	1224	Picking	Baker <i>et al.</i> 1979a
Bothwell	Lanarkshire	NS688593	1314	Picking	Rutherford & Malcolm 2011
Brandon	Warwickshire	SP408759	1266	Burning	Chatwin 1957
Bungay	Suffolk	TM336897	1174	Undermining	Braun 1937
Castell Bryn Amlwg	Shropshire	SO167846	Early 13 <sup>th</sup> century onwards	Picking; burning	Alcock <i>et al.</i> 1967–8
Castell Carndochan	Merioneth	SH847307	13 <sup>th</sup> century	Burning	Hopewell 2015
Castle Rushen	Isle of Man	SC265675	14 <sup>th</sup> century	Picking	Drury McPherson Partnership 2012
Coull	Aberdeenshire	NJ513022	14 <sup>th</sup> century	Picking; burning	Simpson 1924
Degannwy	Caernarfonshire	SH782795	1263	Picking; undermining	Alcock 1968
Dryslwyn	Carmarthenshire	SN554204	1407	Burning; undermining	Caple 2007



Dudley	Staffordshire	SO947907	1175	Picking; burning	Boland 1984
Duffield	Derbyshire	SK343441	After 1250	Burning	Manby 1959
Esslemont	Aberdeenshire	NJ932298	14 <sup>th</sup> or 15 <sup>th</sup> century	Burning	Simpson 1944
Farnham	Surrey	SU837473	Mid-12 <sup>th</sup> century	Picking	Thompson 1960
Ludgershall	Wiltshire	SU264512	Second half of the 12 <sup>th</sup> century	Picking	Ellis 2000a
Nevern	Pembrokeshire	SN082402	1195	Undermining; burning	Caple 2009
Newnham	Kent	TQ955579	12 <sup>th</sup> century	Picking	Jardine Rose 2016, pers. comm.
Pontesbury	Shropshire	SJ401060	12 <sup>th</sup> or 13 <sup>th</sup> century	Burning	Barker 1961– 64b
Radcot	Oxfordshire	SU285996	12 <sup>th</sup> century	Picking	Wessex Archaeology 2009
Wareham	Dorset	SY922872	During or shortly after 'the Anarchy'	Burning, picking	Renn 1960

The differing methods of destruction are demonstrated by the fact that in the case of Wareham burnt timbers were found within the great tower (Renn 1960), whereas at Bungay excavation uncovered an incomplete mine, which would have been used to collapse the great tower (Braun 1934, 113). While there is no unifying method of destruction the frequent use of fire is particularly interesting as great towers were usually built in stone. For a fire to have started accidentally within a stone tower and to have progressed to such a stage where the building was severely damaged is the least likely scenario. More plausible is that fire would be used deliberately, whether during an attack or immediately afterwards; the latter of which would constitute slighting. While it may be difficult to distinguish between the two, it is less likely that it would have been inflicted during an attack. With a force of defenders in the tower, there would have been people on hand to deal with fire. The conclusion is that when evidence of destructive fire is found within a great tower, the most reasonable explanation is that it represents an act of slighting. Evidence for when a phase of destruction took place is not common but can sometimes be inferred by relative dating. The

conclusions of the excavators will be noted and differentiated from my own interpretation.

Evidence of mining is rare, partly because when successful traces of the mine are obscured. However, three examples of great towers offer some evidence of mining. As discussed in Chapter 3, the closer the origin of the mine to the castle the more likely it is to have been used for slighting rather than part of a siege as greater distance provides greater protection for the diggers. Since this chapter considers the location of destruction, it is possible to put forward another suggestion: the further inside the castle the mining took place the more likely it was to be part of slighting rather than a siege. Generally, if a siege progressed to the stage where the garrison had to relinquish the outer defences, surrender was not far behind. It may be considered that the position of the great towers at the heart of the castles of Bungay and Degannwy magnifies the chances that it happened after the castle had been captured since there were additional defences to overcome. While the account of the siege of Rochester Castle reminds us that this is not a firm rule, it does offer a useful guide.

In the 1930s, excavations at **Bungay Castle** (Suffolk) made the unusual discovery of a mine gallery beneath the great tower (Fig. 4.1 and Fig. 4.2). The excavation focused entirely on the great tower and its forebuilding. Though the report mentioned no dating evidence from the excavation, the most likely date for the creation of the gallery is 1174 when Hugh Bigod, earl of Norfolk, was involved in rebellion against Henry II, based on documentary evidence. On 24<sup>th</sup> July, 500 carpenters were preparing siege engines with which to attack Bungay Castle. The next day, Hugh surrendered unconditionally to Henry II, meeting with him in person before hostilities were fully underway. The king outlawed the earl and ordered the destruction of his castles (Braun 1934, 113). Castles were an important as a means of resisting the rebellion, and Henry II's extensive spending on castles in his reign, especially the year before the rebellion, was an important factor in opposing the rebels (Latimer 2015, 165).

This tunnel is tangible evidence of the intention to demolish the castle. The excavator suggested a fine of a thousand marks was enough to persuade the king to spare this castle, though Bigod's other possessions were slighted, most notably Framlingham (Braun 1934, 113). This is a satisfactory explanation and emphasises the importance of castles as a status symbol. Had military

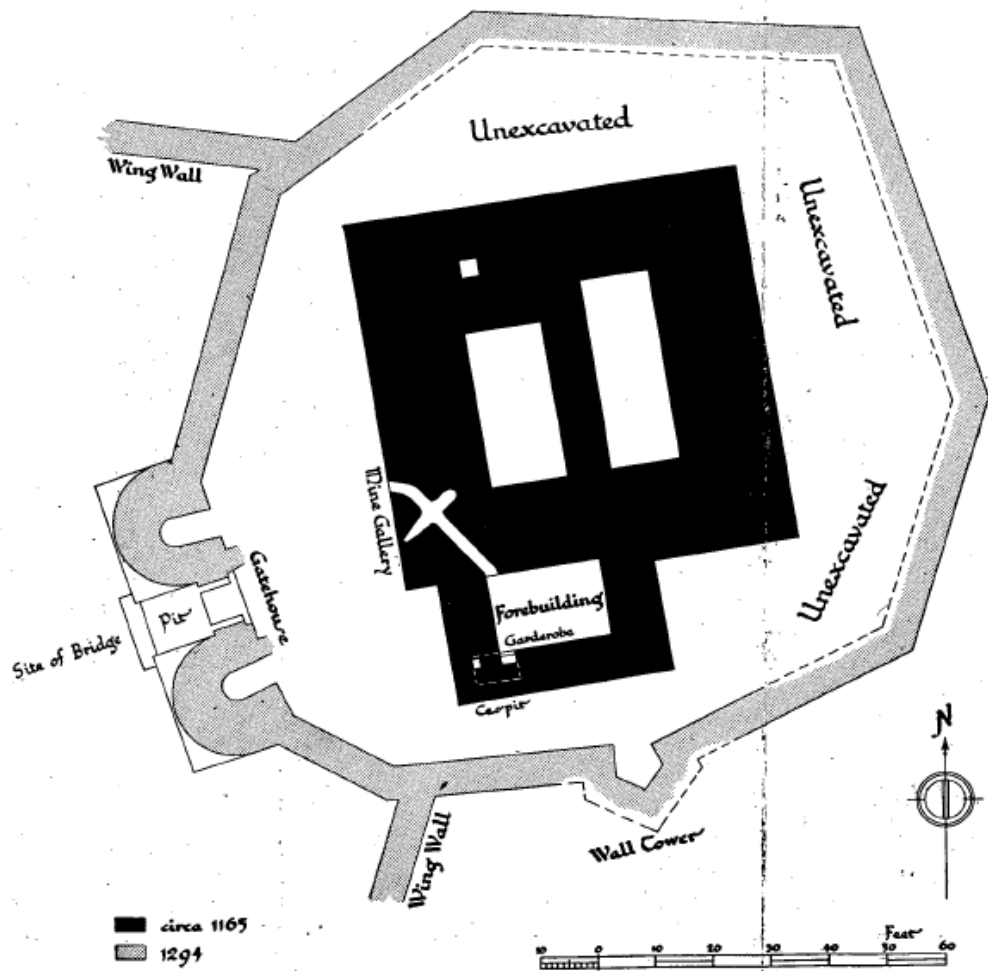


Fig. 4.1. A 1935 plan of the great tower at Bungay Castle, showing the mine under the south-east corner of the structure. From Braun 1934, 110–111.



Fig. 4.2. The mine under the great tower, seen from the south east. From Braun 1934, 110–111.

concerns been the over-riding factor a payment may not have been sufficient to prevent the removal of a threat. While Bigod secured a reprieve for Bungay Castle, the king still slighted the others as punishment for the rebellion. While other forms of slighting leave open the possibility that remodelling or weathering may have been factors involved – for example with filled ditches or demolished walls – a mine gallery is unambiguous evidence of intent to destroy a structure as the method meant building material that would otherwise be reusable was much more likely to be damaged.

**Degannwy Castle** (Caernarfonshire) offers another example of undermining. The great tower was built in the inner ward by Henry III between 1247 and 1249. In 1263 Llywelyn ap Gruffydd besieged the castle and its garrison surrendered (Brown, Colvin & Taylor 1963b, 625–626). Large-scale excavations were carried out over a total of 14 weeks between 1961 and 1966, examining the great tower, gatehouse, ditches, and defences including mural towers, and traces of interior structures (Alcock 1968, 192). The remains of the castle bear testament to the destructive might of the Welsh prince (Fig. 4.3). Two burnt props were recovered from the round tower in the upper ward; these had been used to shore up a mine, burning them had caused it and part of the tower above to collapse. Further supporting evidence of destruction was found across the site and will be discussed in later sections. The scale was far beyond what would be incurred through an attack, and instead reflects a deliberate act of slighting. The location of the mine within the core of the castle is a strong indicator of slighting.

Mining may also have been used at **Nevern Castle** (Pembrokeshire) when it was slighted in 1195 by Hywel Sais. Excavations began in 2008 and are ongoing, having sampled a large part of the site (Fig. 4.4a). Trench F examined the circular donjon on top of the motte. The excavation found the tower had several significant fractures (Fig. 4.4b) and Caple (2009, 7) hypothesised this may have been the result of attempted mining or could have been the result of the motte collapsing under the weight of the tower. The available plan of the motte (Fig. 4.4b) does not indicate the earthwork has subsided and is no sign of rotational slip, which might appear as terracing. It is, therefore, the conclusion of this thesis that slighting is far more likely especially given the destruction found elsewhere on the site (discussed below) and the fact the damage was incurred on the side of the tower facing away from the castle. The attempt to collapse

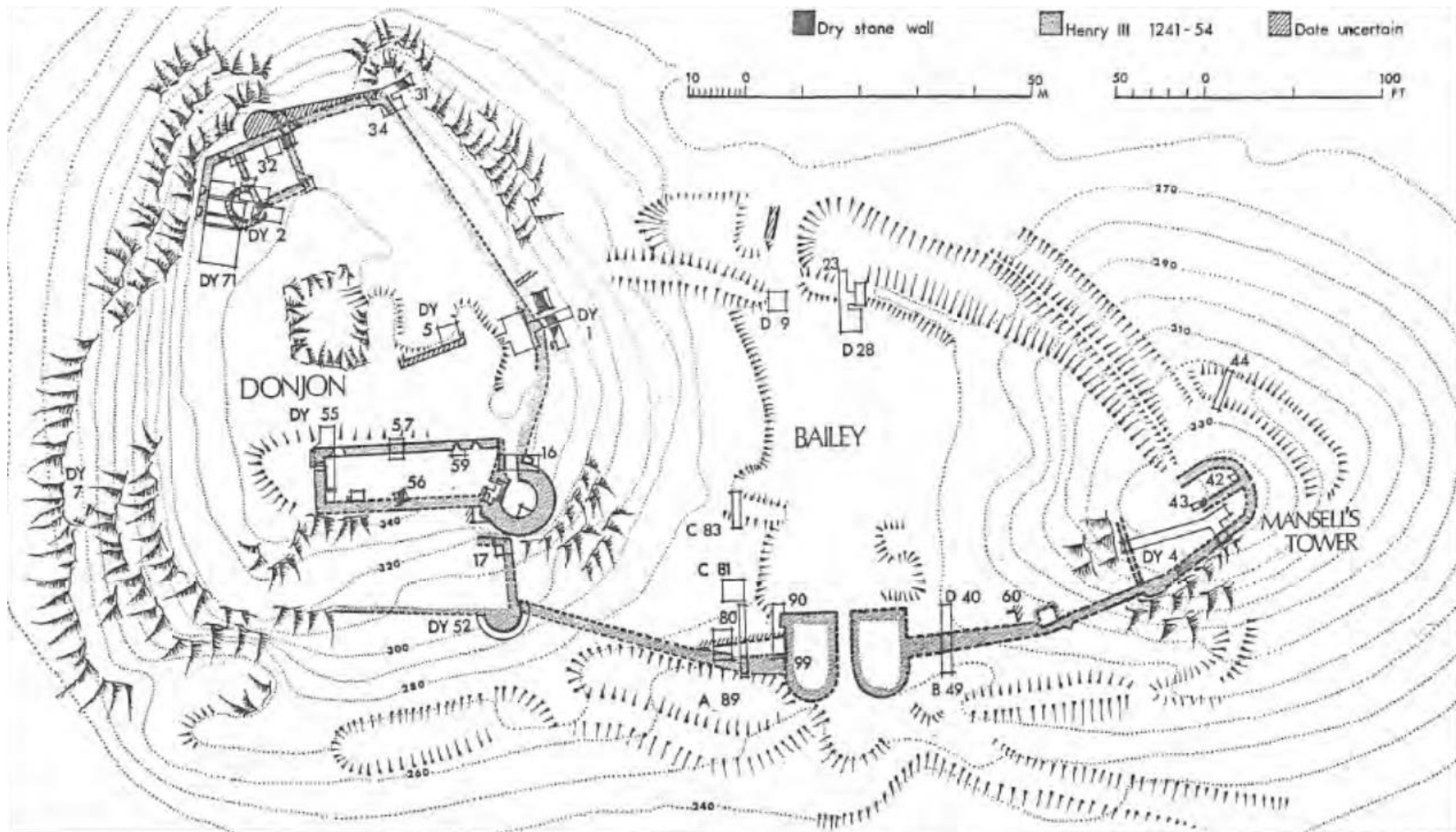


Fig. 4.3. Excavations at Degannwy Castle, 1961–66. From Alcock 1968, between pages 194 and 195.

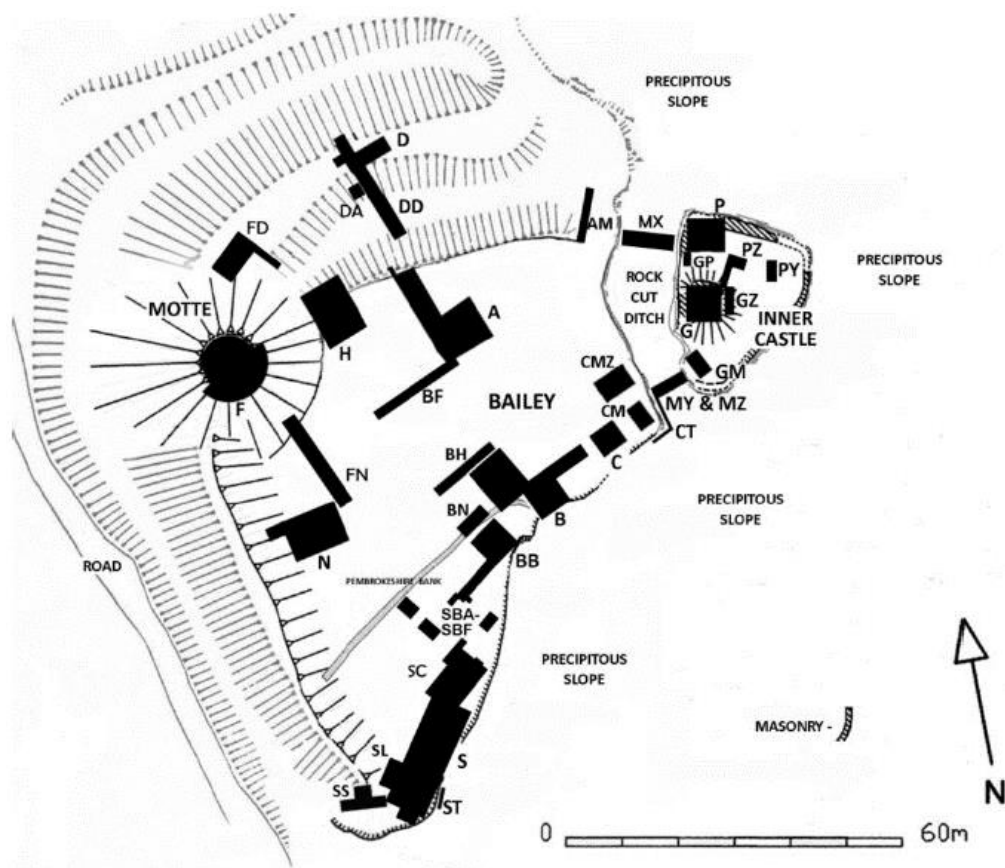


Fig. 4.4a. The location of excavations at Nevern Castle between 2008 and 2015. Caple 2015, 1.

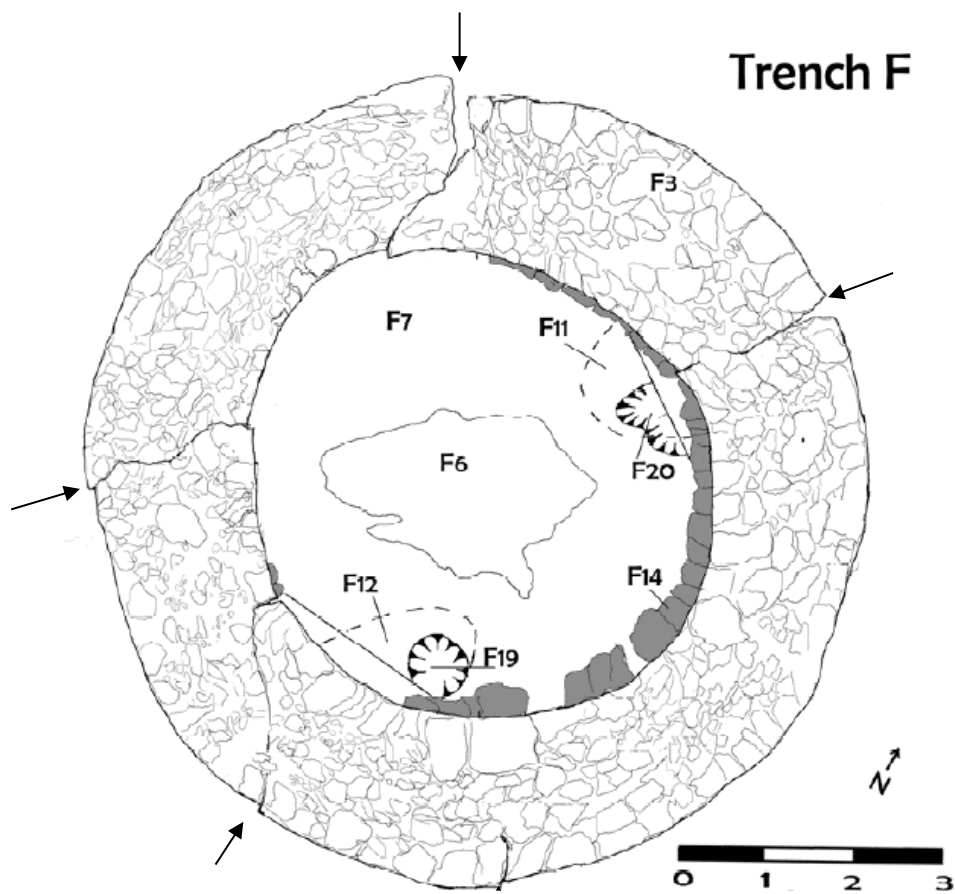


Fig. 4.4b. The plan of Nevern Castle's donjon from Caple 2009, 7). The cracks, highlighted by arrows, in the northwest and west segments of the tower are most pronounced, indicating this is where the tower collapsed.

this side of the tower would have not only weakened it militarily but been highly visible, which heightens the probability that it was deliberate as opposed to subsistence in the motte. There are analogies with Bothwell Castle in Scotland, where the side of the donjon facing outwards from the castle was demolished in the 14<sup>th</sup> century.

While there are few examples of mining, fire was used much more frequently, and the way it was used at several sites indicates the castles in question were slighted. **Wareham Castle** (Dorset) was deliberately fired, as evidence by trial trenching in 1950 (Fig. 4.5) on the site of the great tower. This excavation uncovered charred oak timbers on the floor level, as well as evidence of repairs. The report speculated the damage may have taken place during 'the Anarchy'. It changed hands several times during this period, twice in 1138, when Earl Robert of Gloucester, one of Matilda's foremost supporters, lost and recaptured the castle, and then again in 1142 when the earl again lost and retook Wareham (*Historia Novella* trans. Potter 1998, ch 520). The final capture of the castle involved siege engines, but it was surrendered without an assault. The castle continued in use after this period, though that does not guarantee the great tower was intact (Renn 1960, 56, 60). 'The Anarchy' is a

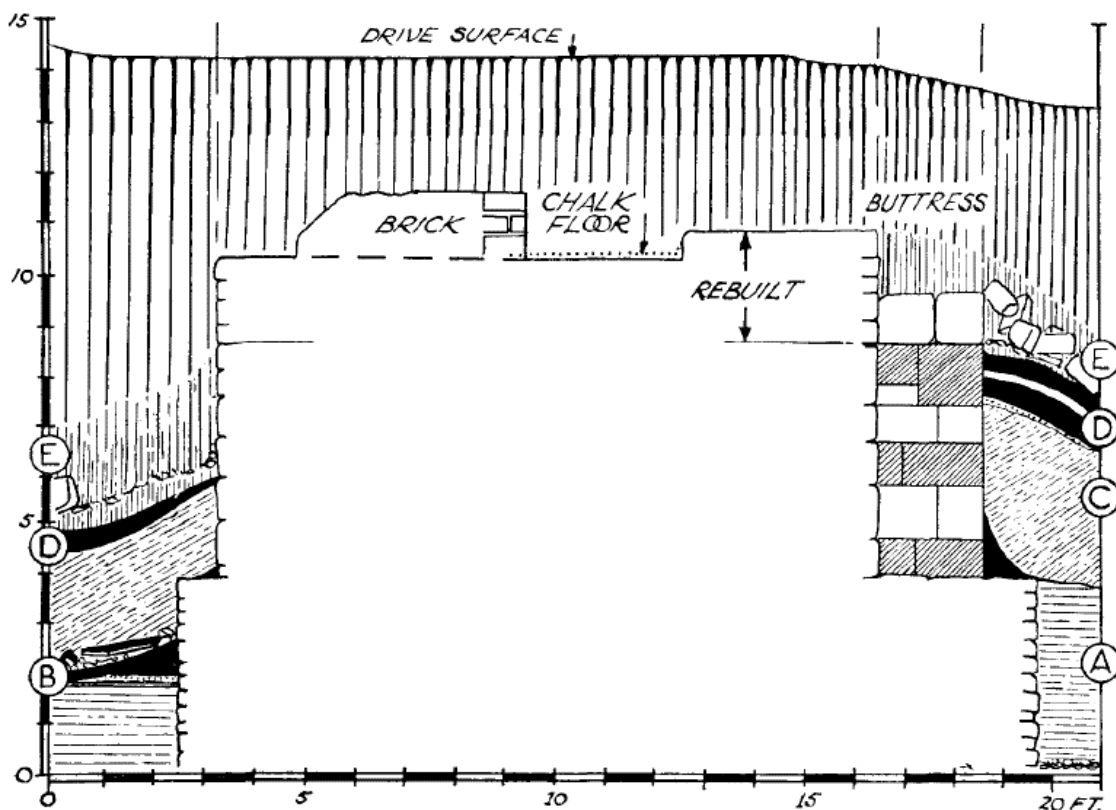


Fig. 4.5. A section across the north wall of Wareham Castle's great tower. The right-hand side of the image represents the interior of the tower. From Renn 1960, 59.

particularly likely period for the great tower to have been slighted, given that it would damage a military structure whilst sending out a statement regarding power over the area. As the castle was Earl Robert's to begin with, the likely conclusion is that the firing was carried out by King Stephen. This might help explain why the site remained in use.

The great tower at **Duffield Castle** (Derbyshire) was discovered by accident in 1886 and excavated that year. The castle was probably built by Henry de Ferrers in the late 11<sup>th</sup> century and descended with the family until 1266 (Manby 1959, 17–19). The 19<sup>th</sup> century work examined the tower itself (Fig. 4.6), as well as points along the perimeter of the site to establish its limits (Cox 1887, 136–137). Key evidence was discovered proving that the site underwent an intense destruction event: 'A thick deposit of charcoal was found on all sides of the keep ... and in many places the stones and masonry showed unmistakable signs of having been exposed to heat' (Cox 1887, 176). However, the discovery of the charcoal within the tower as well as around it demonstrates this was not simply a means of attack, but the act of a group who had taken control of the castle. Rubble was discovered to the north of the great tower, indicating that as the timber fittings inside the building had burned, the structure had weakened and collapsed. The quantity of material indicated stones that were in a fit state for use elsewhere were removed and reused (Cox 1887, 176–177). Measuring 28m by 29m externally, the rectangular great tower would have been amongst the largest in England (Jessop & Beauchamp 2015, 29), heightening the visual and social impact of the destruction. The site itself was never reused. Coarseware pottery evidence recovered from excavations at in 1957 indicates the main activity on the site fell in the period of 1150 to 1250 (Manby 1959, 15–16). This fits with Cox's theory that the castle was slighted around 1266 as punishment for Robert de Ferrers' rebellion against Henry III, though contemporary documents do not record such an order (Cox 1887, 176–177; Manby 1959, 19). Manby's argument is persuasive and recent reassessment of the site's archaeology and history concluded the castle was slighted in direct relation to the events of 1266 (Jessop & Beauchamp 2015, 14–15). Robert de Ferrers' castle at Tutbury (Staffordshire) was also supposed to have been captured and damaged by forces loyal to Henry III around this time (Williams 2011, 96). There are few examples of castle slighting in relation



to the Second Barons' War of the 1260s, although Sheffield Castle (Yorkshire) is discussed later.

Around 90 years earlier, William de Ferrers, styled Earl Ferrers, joined the rebellion against Henry II led by his sons; when the revolt failed, de Ferrers' was punished by having his castles at Duffield and Tutbury slighted (Williams 2011, 91) which was a common occurrence in the aftermath of the war, but in this case is not discernible through the archaeological record. The pottery

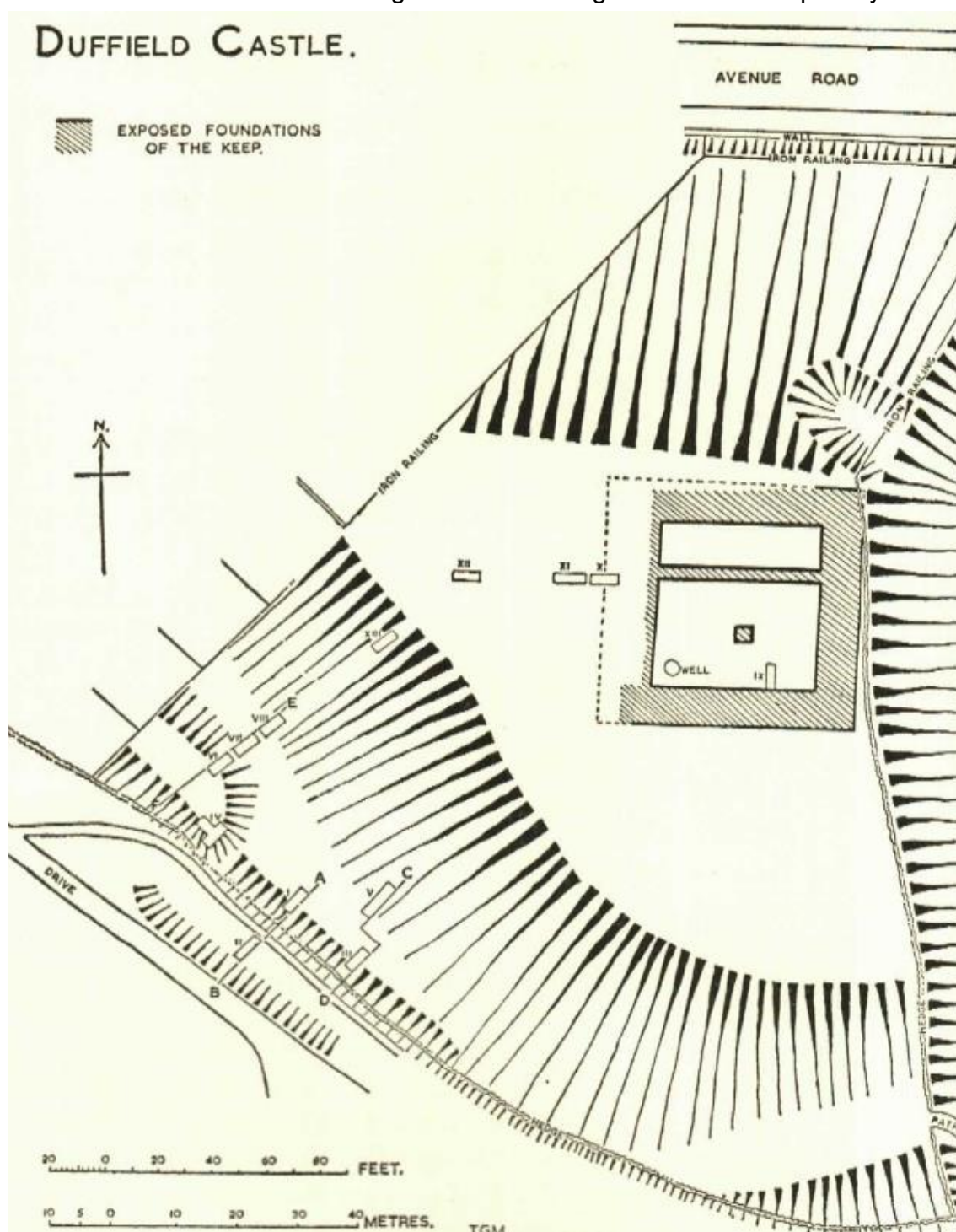


Fig. 4.6. Plan of the 1957 excavations at Duffield Castle. The area west of the great tower was excavated in 1886. From Manby 1959, 2.

evidence indicates Duffield Castle was reused, as must have been the case if it was again slighted in the second half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Whereas the burning at Duffield is firm proof of slighting, no such evidence is available at Tutbury. Excavations at 12 areas throughout the castle, from the motte to the outer bailey, could only find inconclusive evidence of remodelling in a single area, tentatively linked to the events of the 1170s (Hislop 2011b, 168–199). The difference in the excavated record is no doubt because Tutbury was reused over the following centuries, at times under direct royal control, until it was slighted during the English Civil War (Williams 2011, 96–115). The continued reuse and maintenance may have removed much of the evidence of slighting; though not always as demonstrated when rubble deposits were found in the ditches of Leicester Castle. Burnt deposits could have been dispersed, ditches cleared, and buildings repaired or replaced. However, the only surviving 12<sup>th</sup>- or 13<sup>th</sup>-century architecture on the site is confined to the chapel (Hislop 2011a, 132–133). Tutbury and Duffield's diverging fates created starkly contrasting archaeological records. Though excavations at Tutbury covered several areas, it is possible that evidence yet exists which was missed by the locations of the trenches.

Excavations were carried out at **Brandon Castle** (Warwickshire) in 1947 to establish the presence of a great tower. The tower was investigated, and three trenches were opened in the castle's eastern enclosure, and some smaller trenches in the western enclosure. Crucially, the layout of the great tower was established, and it was discovered that facing stones from the exterior and part of the interior had been removed. Where facing stones were extant inside the great tower, they were "cracked and split on the surface" (Chatwin 1957, 66). In the excavator's opinion the damage was caused by fire, and the stone which remained *in situ* was untouched because it was unsuitable for reuse. Two separate contemporary sources date the slighting of the castle to 1266, the Pipe Rolls suggest Brandon Castle was slighted by Kenilworth Castle's garrison, men loyal to Simon de Montfort and rebelling against Henry III, as John de Verdon, the owner, was loyal to the king. However, the Leger Book of Stoneley Abbey recorded that the castle was 'destroyed' in 1266 because de Verdon was in fact part of the garrison defending Kenilworth. Chatwin (1957, 64–65) concludes the royal record is more likely to be correct since later that year de Verdon was tasked with defending Worcestershire for

the king; such a rapid change of support and fortune is unlikely. The fact the stone on the outside was robbed to a much greater extent than inside indicates it was effectively undamaged by fire (Chatwin 1957, 65–68). This would mean the fire was at its most intense inside the tower. As mentioned in Chapter 3, accidental fire in a predominantly stone structure was generally improbable and the logical conclusion when a fire began within a stone great tower is that it was unlikely to be part of an attack. Instead the most plausible scenario is that the castle was captured and that the victors set about slighting it, taking particular care to damage the great tower by gutting it with fire.

**Esslemont Castle** (Aberdeenshire) is an example of a castle slighted during internal conflict in Scotland. Built in the 14<sup>th</sup> or 15<sup>th</sup> century, Esslemont is a tower house and is considered here because its function was analogous to a great tower. As with other mentioned above accidental fire or assault is unlikely. Therefore, the evidence of burning ‘abundantly present’ both inside and outside the tower house suggests slighting. Pottery dating to the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries broadly dates this event (Simpson 1944, 101–102). This corroborates the documented history of the castle: it was owned by the Cheyne family who feuded with the Hay family. The situation worsened until the Hays captured the castle in 1493 and burnt it (Simpson 1944, 100). This contrasts with the previous examples in which there was often a backdrop of full-scale war or rebellion evident. Esslemont Castle was slighted much later than the other sites considered and was an example of hostilities on a regional rather than national level. It reflects the various scales of prestige invested in castle building and ownership and should serve as proof that slighting was a malicious act carried out to undermine an opponent.

Rescue excavations at **Pontesbury Castle** (Shropshire) in 1961 and 1964 ahead of planned construction work investigated part of the great tower as well as the bank and ditch enclosing the site (Fig. 4.7). A layer of burnt wattle and daub was found within the tower, and a small forebuilding had been completely destroyed by fire and it is likely these two events took place at the same time (Barker 1961–64b, 217). Pottery evidence indicates that activity on the site took place in the 12<sup>th</sup> or 13<sup>th</sup> centuries, suggesting the destruction event at Pontesbury took place at the end of this period (Barker 1961–64b, 220–221). Despite having a timber forebuilding, the substantial stone walls of the great tower – at least 1.8m thick – would have provided some protection against fire.

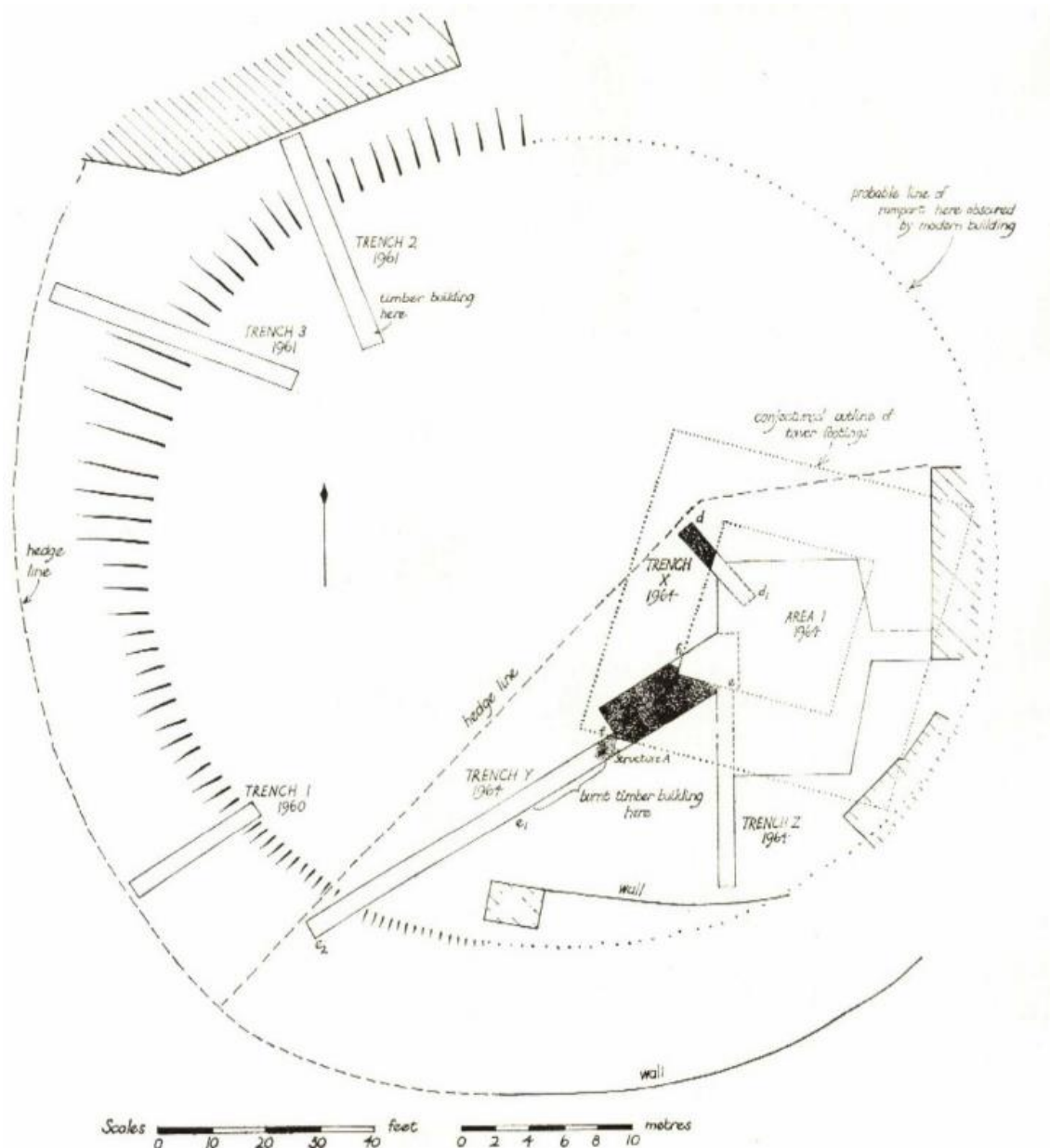


Fig. 4.7. A plan of Pontesbury Castle, showing various features and the locations of the trenches. From Barker 1961–64b, 214.

It therefore is likely that fire was introduced into the great tower deliberately, but not as part of an attack. The conclusion is that this was an act of slighting.

Small-scale excavations took place at **Castell Bryn Amlwg** (Shropshire) in the Welsh marches in 1963 with the intention of establishing the plan of the castle (Fig. 4.8). Ten cuttings were made, but they were small and all concentrated on the perimeter (Alcock *et al.* 1967–8, 9, 13). A cutting across the great tower at the east end of the site discovered ‘large burnt timbers’ (Alcock *et al.* 1967–8, 16). Sadly, this was not investigated further as it was not the purpose of the excavation, and no interpretation was given. Using the methodological framework outlined in Chapter 3, this thesis reappraises the evidence. The presence of burnt timber within the great tower as was the case

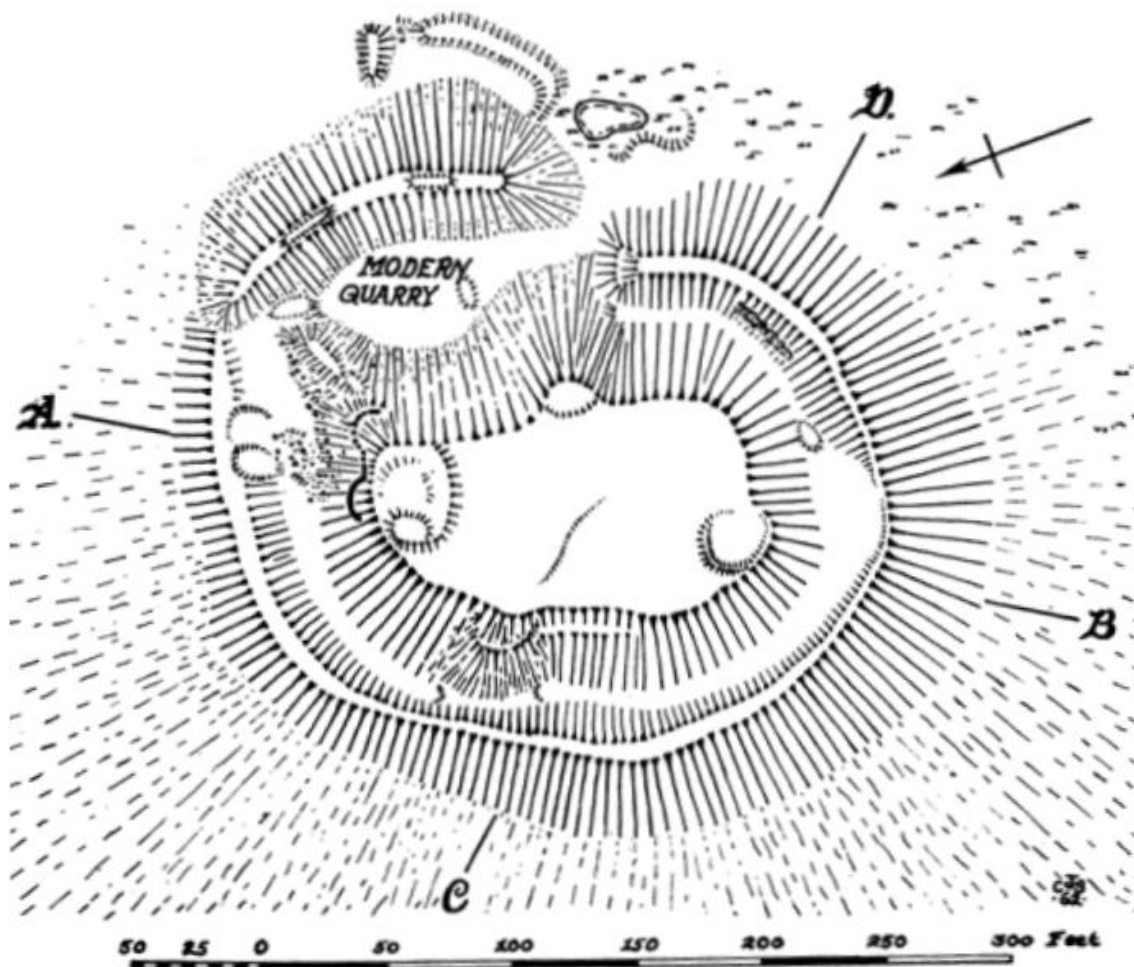


Fig. 4.8. Plan of Castell Bryn Amlwg from 1960. Note how all the towers, including those of the gatehouse have collapsed into the ditch. From Alcock et al. 1967–8, 11.

at Brandon is indicative of slighting, while accidental fire and assault are unlikely. Based entirely on architectural comparisons (the gatehouse has an Edwardian design) the excavator suggested the stone phase of the castle was constructed in the 13<sup>th</sup> century (Alcock *et al.* 1967–8, 20), providing a broad *terminus post quem* for the slighting. As the site was not repaired it is unlikely that slighting took place before the 13<sup>th</sup> century, but the event itself has not been dated.

In the late 18<sup>th</sup> century treasure hunters digging at **Castell Carndochan** (Merioneth) discovered ‘human bones and burnt wood’, leading to the conclusion that fire had destroyed the site. Excavations in 1872 produced further evidence of fire when they discovered charcoal and blackened soil (Hughes 1885, 189–190). It is unclear which part of the castle they excavated, but urgent conservation work carried out by GAT in 2015 and 2016 found burnt material in and around the great tower. A charcoal rich soil context abutted the north-west external face of the square great tower, and charcoal was



discovered within the tower along with stones cracked by fire (Hopewell 2015, 6–7; GAT 2016). While there is evidence of fire both inside and outside the stone structure, it is again the burning of the interior which is indicative of slighting. With all cases of burning there is the possibility the fire was accidental. As discussed at Chapter 3.3.1 the introduction of fire resistant materials such as stone makes accidental fire much less likely, but with hearths and embrasures combined with timber flooring, it remains possible. However, I argue a key piece of evidence here is out of seven instances of fire used in the destruction of great towers only Esslemont was later reused. If the fire had been accidental it is much more likely, though not guaranteed, that the owner would have repaired the structure.

One of the most striking examples of medieval slighting can be found at **Bothwell Castle** (Lanarkshire). The most prominent feature of the 13<sup>th</sup>-century stone-built enclosure castle is the circular donjon measuring 20m in diameter and 35m high (Rutherford & Malcolm 2011, 189–191). The Scottish castle was captured by the English in 1294 and re-taken by Edward Bruce – King Robert

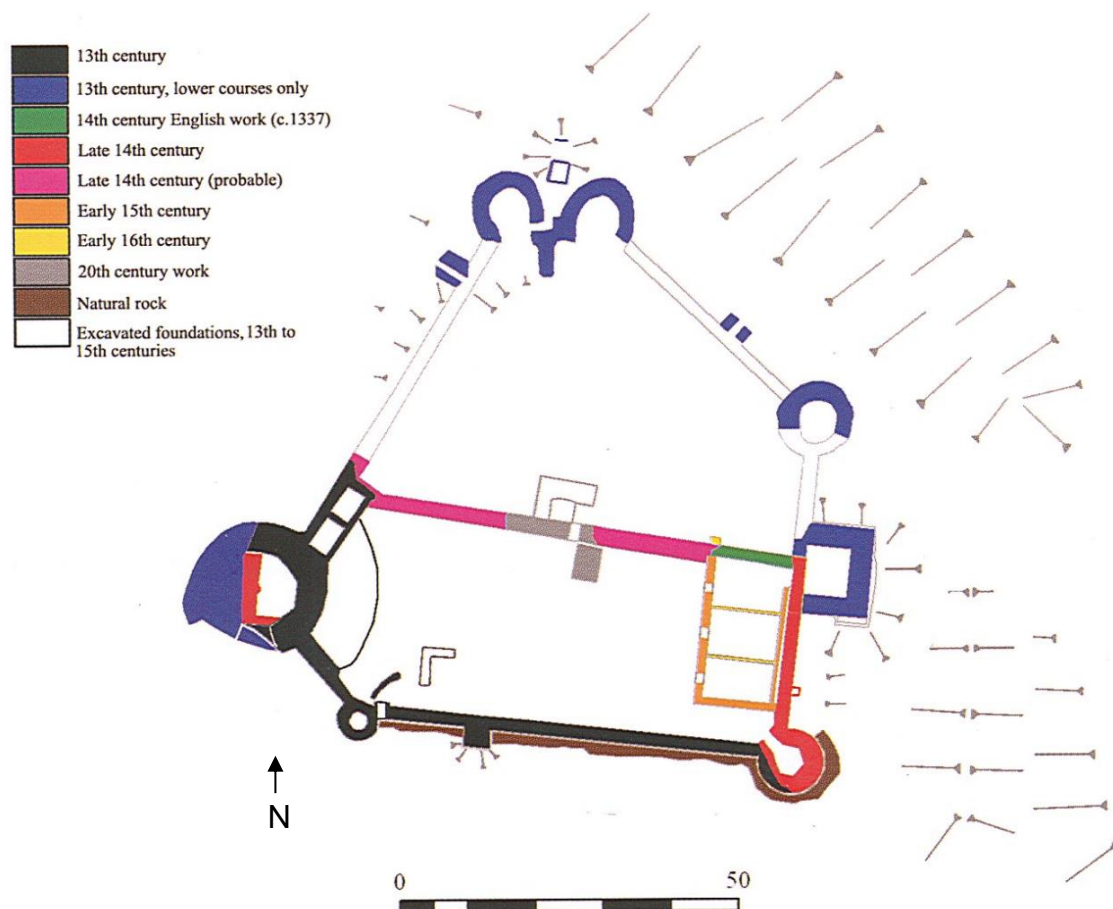


Fig. 4.9. A phased plan of Bothwell Castle. Note how the 13<sup>th</sup>-century donjon has had one face removed and a late 14<sup>th</sup>-century crosswall inserted. From Rutherford & Malcolm 2011, 198.

Bruce's brother – in 1314 at which point it was slighted according to the historical record (Rutherford & Malcolm 2011, 190); this was probably part of Robert Bruce's policy of slighting castles likely to be used by the English. After a period of abandonment, the castle was taken by the English in the 1330s, recaptured by the Scottish in 1337 and again slighted (Ludlow forthcoming, 12).

The great tower's west face has been demolished, reduced almost to its footings (Simpson 1925, 174). This part of the tower was oriented away from the castle. The damage inflicted to the most visible part of the castle bears similarities to that inflicted on Kenilworth's great tower in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, when the aspect of the great tower which faced the town was slighted (Johnson 2002). At Bothwell, the great tower was partially repaired with the construction of a cross-wall (Fig. 4.9) but to a standard that prompted Rutherford and Malcolm (2011) to suggest it was fit only to be used as a prison, and certainly not for high-status accommodation. They also suggested the decision not to rebuild the tower completely was not dictated by cost. Instead they propose it was more important to be *seen* to repair the tower than to repair it fully, that in doing so the owner was showing how 'his expanding *dominium* could be literally and figuratively built on old foundations' (Rutherford & Malcolm 2011, 197–198).

Though the castle was founded by Walter de Moray, it was under English control from 1301 to 1314 through Aymer de Valence. Valence was a prominent magnate under Edward I and Edward II and as Ludlow (forthcoming, 30) points out his tenure at the castle may have eroded the perception of the castle as Scottish and started the process of turning it into an emblem of English rule, especially as it was Valence's *caput*.

It is typically assumed the tower's side was demolished in the 1337 event. This is particularly likely as had the great tower been in such a state of disrepair in the 1330s it may have deterred the English from occupying the castle. It is instructive that the damage to the great tower may have been intended to prevent its military use by the English but did not preclude its reuse by the Scots in the 1370s. Clearly while the great tower had once been the focus of the castle, it was still a useful as a centre of administration, and repairing the site helped complete its transition from an English fort back to a Scottish emblem of power, while the partial nature of the rebuilding meant the memory of the expulsion of the English from Bothwell was not erased.

While a survey of the donjon provides evidence of its destruction and later repair, it is best to proceed with caution when examining the rest of the castle. It might be tempting, for example, to assume that since the outer enclosure survives only at foundation level this is due to Bruce's slighting. However, excavations in the enclosure did not encounter demolition debris, indicating this was not the case. Instead it is likely the curtain walls were left unfinished (Rutherford & Malcolm 2011, 194–196). This highlights the importance of excavated evidence and how even relatively conservative extrapolation can be fraught with risk.

There are some parallels with Bothwell to be found at **Coull Castle** (Aberdeenshire) where the outermost half of the circular donjon was demolished, and a lower quality repair added (Fig. 4.10) (Simpson 1924, 65–66). Dating for the destruction at Coull Castle was based not on archaeological evidence, but on historical context. The excavator argued the dismantling of the castle was in line with Robert Bruce's policy of slighting castles he captured (Simpson 1924, 94). It is possible the tower was damaged in an attack, however there is evidence for destruction in other parts of the castle that indicates a planned scheme of destruction. This suggests the donjon was broken down as part of a concerted effort to slight the castle. The castle is typical of 13<sup>th</sup>-century design in Scotland, and the Wars of Scottish Independence would provide a likely context for slighting to take place. Dating the event to the 14<sup>th</sup> century is a reasonable approach, and while the Anglo-Scottish Wars provide a likely context we should be cautious about attributing the slighting to Robert Bruce specifically.

The oldest surviving part of **Castle Rushen** (Isle of Man) is the square great tower which was built around 1200 (Drury McPherson Partnership 2012, 43). A building survey highlighted that the tower itself has been rebuilt (Fig. 3.6). The masonry from when the tower was first built has been levelled off but survives higher in the north corner of the west face. This does not follow usual building patterns, which would have levelled the building up one stage at a time, and instead indicates the wall has been partially demolished, with the corner surviving to a greater height because of the strength of the structure (Drury McPherson Partnership 2012, 43). Robert Bruce besieged the castle in 1313 for three weeks before he gained control of Castle Rushen. Given how Robert Bruce was named as the culprit for the slighting of Coull, Bothwell, and Buittle



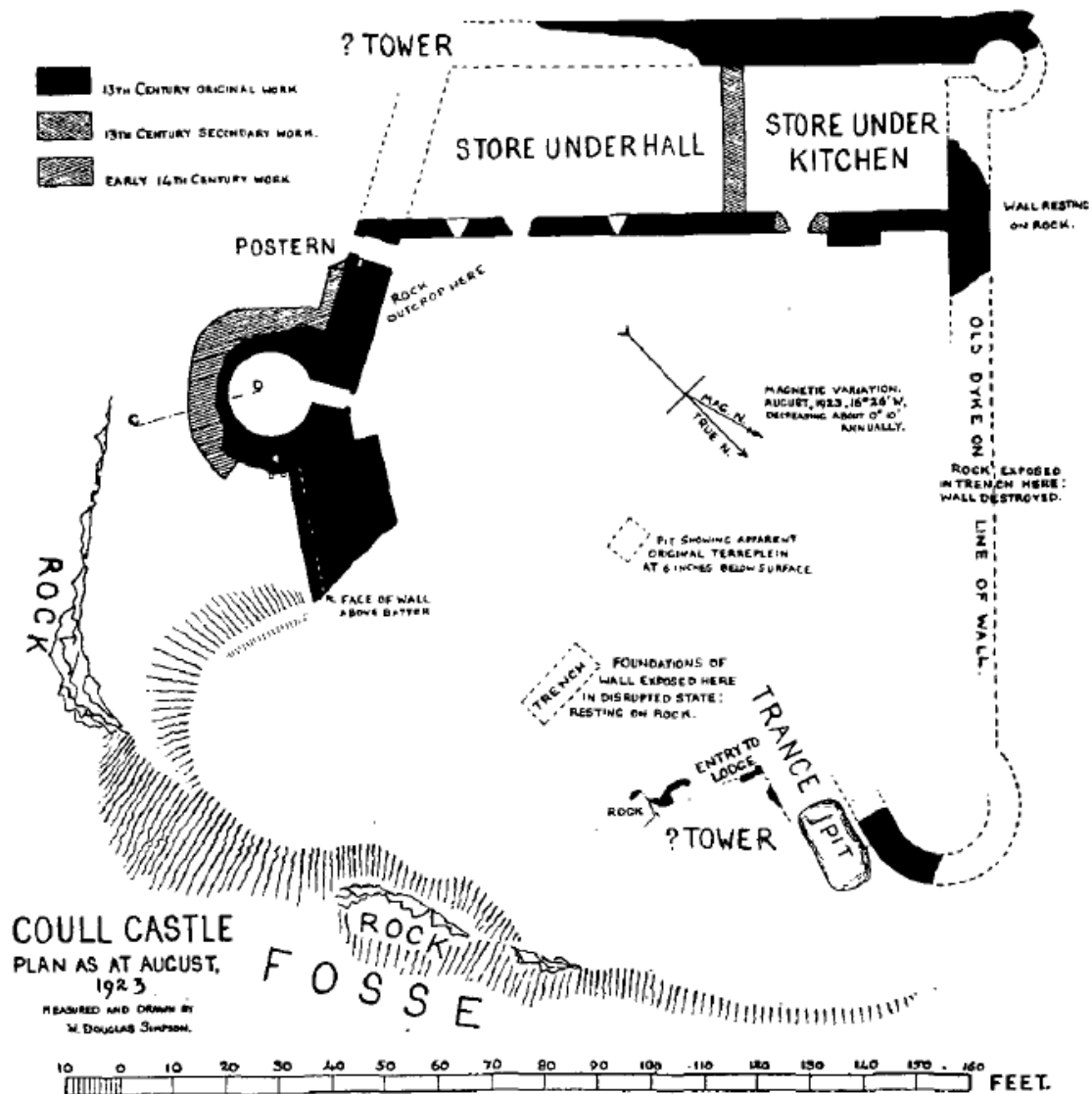


Fig. 4.10. A plan of excavations at Coull Castle in the 1920s. Compare the damage inflicted on the circular donjon with that evident at Bothwell Castle. From Simpson 1924, 59.

(mentioned later) the easy assumption – and one made frequently in relation to this site – is that he was also responsible for slighting Castle Rushen. Instead the report from the Drury McPherson Partnership (2012, 44) rejects such assumptions, ‘there is nothing in the thin historical record to confirm this, or indeed to establish a clear pattern to Robert’s treatment of castles captured during his raiding of northern England early in the 14th century’. David Cornell’s (2008, 255–257) study of the role of castles in Robert Bruce’s campaign supports this as it found while he slighted key fortifications in Scotland, even royal sites, ‘Bruce did not undertake a concerted and determined campaign against the castles of northern England on the scale of that of 1311–14 which had proved so spectacularly successful in Scotland’. The Drury McPherson Partnership was suggested the damage at Castle Rushen might alternatively

date from 1333, at which point the castle came under the control of the English shortly after the battle of Halidon Hill. The key historical context is a change of hands meant that one or more person would have been interested in asserting their authority over the Isle of Man through its principal fortification, a strong reason to slight a castle. Importantly, the nature of the damage – being inflicted on all four faces – would have been unlikely through the course of an assault. It is possible that the previous owner slighted the castle to prevent its use by the English or Edward III might have ordered its reduction before he gave it to Sir William Montacute.

This might reasonably bring into question whether Coull's slighting should be attributed to Robert Bruce given a similarly 'thin historical record', especially as Simpson (1924, 51) remarks that 'As to the fortunes of Coull Castle during these stormy years nothing is known'. At some point in the 14<sup>th</sup> century ownership of the Coull Castle changed from the earls of Fife to the Douglas family; Simpson (1924, 51) suggests this may be related to the fact that the earl of Fife joined Edward Balliol and fought against David II at the battle of Dupplin in 1332 and subsequently captured. This would provide as suitable a context for slighting the castle as Robert Bruce's campaign because it could be a form of punishment.

**Dryslwyn Castle** (Carmarthenshire) occupies the later end of the timescale covered by this thesis and the destruction event relates back to the theme of revolt. It is a masonry castle consisting of three wards. Large-scale excavations between 1980 and 1995 (Fig. 4.11) explored the entire inner ward, smaller portions of the middle and outer wards, and multiple small trenches were opened in the landscape around the castle (Caple 2007, 4). Founded by Rhys Gryg in the 1220s and besieged by the English in 1287, Dryslwyn Castle was subsequently under English control until the Glendower rebellion (Caple 2007, 1, 7–8). The constable surrendered the castle to Glendower on 3<sup>rd</sup> July 1403 and it remained under Welsh control until about 1407 when the rebellion approached its conclusion (Caple 2007, 47). Of the seven phases of activity identified at Dryslwyn, the circular great tower was built during the earliest and the sixth represents destruction events (Caple 2007, 33–34). In phase 6 the ground-floor entrance to the great tower was walled up as part of a wider effort to make parts of the castle inaccessible using this method (Caple 2007, 67).

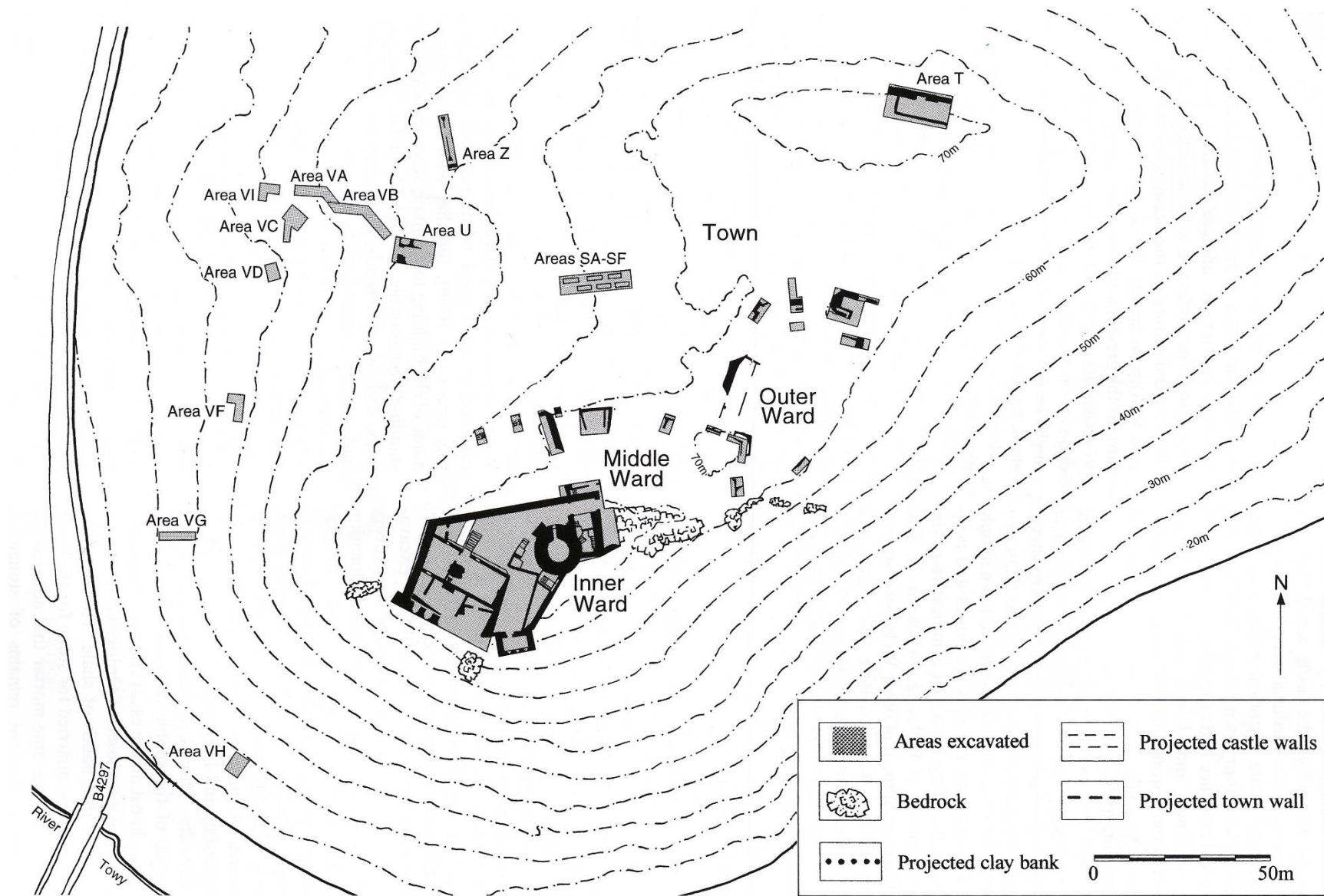


Fig. 4.11. The excavated area of Dryslwyn Castle and associated borough to the north and north east, undertaken between 1980 and 1995. From Caple 2007, 4.

This was followed by two episodes of burning which ultimately led to the collapse of the tower. These acts destroyed the most visible element of the castle and was a systematic attempt to leave the castle unusable, not merely as a fortification but as a habitation.

Ongoing excavations at **Newnham Castle** (Kent) have uncovered the remains of a flint-built great tower. The tower is sealed by a demolition layer of flint, mortar, and plaster, mixed with 12<sup>th</sup>-century pottery. The indication is that the castle was in use for only a very short time before its demolition. In addition, the well was sealed with 'a plug of flint and mortar ... which conforms to standard Norman mortar of the time' (Jardine Rose 2016, pers. comm.). The deliberate sealing of the well indicates this was not accidental, or the direct result of an attack. This makes slighting or remodelling much more likely, however as the castle was only in use for a short time this effectively rules out remodelling.

Between 1964 and 1972 large-scale excavations were undertaken at **Ludgershall Castle** (Wiltshire) in both of the site's enclosures (Fig. 4.12a); they were the first excavations at the castle (Ellis 2000b, 245). In the north enclosure, buildings 6, 7, 9, and 11 were identified as successive great towers (Ellis 2000b, 248). Building 6 only survived as a foundation trench, and was likely never advanced further; building 7 was constructed partly overlapping building 6, with a stair tower and sunken courtyard occupying much of building 6. The construction of building 7 was dated to the mid-12<sup>th</sup> century based on the mostly Newbury B or Netherpton coarseware pottery discovered from period 3 in which the tower was built. Furthermore, the amount of pottery recovered from this period suggested that it was in use for a relatively short period (Ellis 2000a, 27, 30–33, 181). The tower was subsequently dismantled in period 4: the sunken courtyard was levelled, the stair almost entirely removed, while the footings of the tower itself were robbed out apart from on the north side where they were used as the foundation for a revetment. Though it is unclear whether the building was ever completed, this represents a significant act of destruction. Based on pottery evidence – again Newbury B or Netherpton coarseware – and small finds including a mid-12<sup>th</sup> century spur recovered from the sunken courtyard and the foundation trenches of the tower, this was dated to the second half of the 12<sup>th</sup> century (Ellis 2000a, 34, 36–37). Though building 9 encroached on building 7 (Fig. 4.12b), it was suggested the structure never got

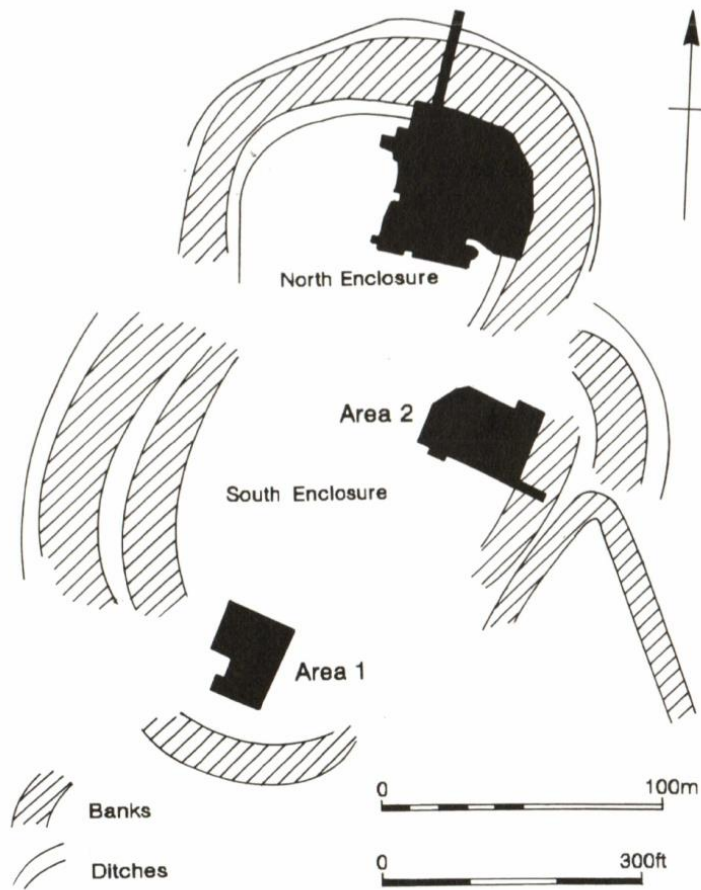


Fig. 4.12a. Location of the excavations undertaken within Ludgershall Castle. From Addyman and Kightly 2000, 4.

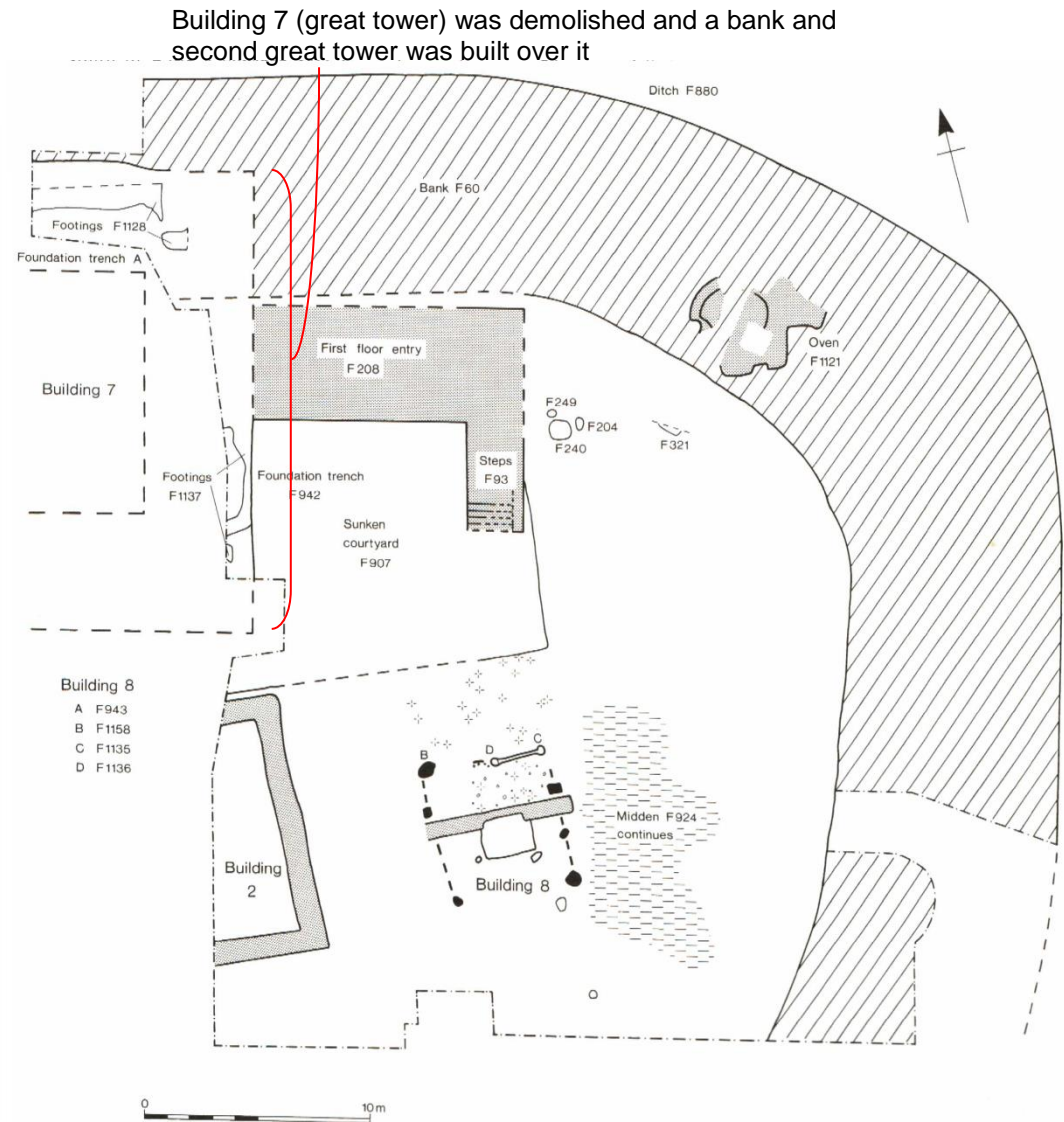


Fig. 4.12b. The excavation of building 7 within the north enclosure of Ludgershall Castle. From Ellis 2000a, 31.

beyond the stage of footings as they were reused by building 11 (Ellis 2000a, 36–37). Buildings 7 and 11, therefore, represent the most substantial great towers on this site. The short life of building 7 can be explained as an act of slighting, as to dismantle such a structure soon after it was built was a significant waste of resources, making peaceful remodelling highly unlikely.

The historical context lends support to this theory. During the mid-12<sup>th</sup> century and through ‘the Anarchy’, Ludgershall Castle belonged to John the Marshal who supported Matilda during the war against King Stephen. His son, William the Marshal inherited the castle, but the Pipe Rolls show that by 1174–75 Ludgershall Castle was under the control of Henry II. William the Marshal joined Henry’s sons in rebellion against the king and it is likely Ludgershall was confiscated as punishment (Addyman & Kightly 2000, 11–12). Peter Ellis (2000b, 248), who compiled and edited the monograph on the 1964–72 excavations, concluded that Henry II was the most likely person to cause the demolition of the great tower, and that it was an act of “reimposing royal order”. The destruction of building 7 was therefore a punitive act.

In all the sites discussed so far, the great tower has been directly examined. At **Bedford Castle** (Bedfordshire) the evidence for a demolished tower is no less compelling. To begin with, when it was first documented in the 1130s it described as having ‘a strong and unshakeable keep’ (quoted in Baker *et al.* 1979a, 10). The castle was held by Faulkes de Bréauté and his brother, William de Bréauté, had incensed the king by detaining a justice on royal business, which ultimately led to the castle being besieged (Carpenter 1990, 360–363). Contemporary chroniclers Ralph de Coggeshall and the Dunstable Chronicler record the course of the siege and note that the garrison surrendered after the great tower was undermined – hence a masonry structure – and partially collapsed (Baker *et al.* 1979a, 11). Though the site of the great tower has not been excavated, a trench across the ditch and part way up the motte uncovered thick layers consisting of loam mixed with mortar and limestone rubble (see Fig. 3.5), suggesting there was a stone structure on top of the mound (Baker *et al.* 1979a, 17). Even if there had been no documentary evidence to support the archaeology, this would have strongly suggested slighting. As well as this evidence for a stone structure on the motte, it is clear the motte itself was mutilated. The stone revetting – feature (106) – shows the line of the mound and that it has clearly been disrupted (Baker *et al.* 1979a, 13–

15). Material on top of the motte was dumped into the ditch, hence the loamy fill. Even though the impact was drastic, the mound was not completely removed. In part, this may reasonably be explained as the extra man-power was not necessary given the extensive slighting elsewhere on the site.

The current great tower at **Dudley** (Staffordshire) was built around 1300, but excavations in 1983–85 (Fig. 6.2) as part of a repair programme discovered this structure overlies the footings of an earlier great tower on a different alignment (Boland 1984, 1; Boland 1985, 25). No datable finds were recovered, so the excavator's interpretation of the structure was based on the documented history of the castle and since Henry II ordered the demolition of the castle in 1175 it was assumed the tower was slighted at this point (Boland 1984, 3). This thesis accepts this conclusion as the most likely scenario for slighting and suggests that as the later tower was built on a different alignment very little of the earlier structure survived by the time of the new construction. It is very likely that the tower was reduced almost to its foundations by the slighting, which would have been an especially powerful act striking at the heart of the castle's social, political, and military power as well as the physical embodiment of the owner's strength and status.

**Radcot Castle** (Oxfordshire) was probably built in the early 12<sup>th</sup> century and was likely the work of Hugh of Buckland, sheriff of Berkshire. The manor and castle descended through his family until the mid-13<sup>th</sup> century when the de Bessiles family inherited it through marriage (Page 2012, 255–258). According to the *Gesta Stephani*

[Empress Matilda] earnestly besought ... those who were bound to her by faith and homage to lend their best support to her enterprise, and fortified castles in various places, wherever she most conveniently could ... one at the hamlet of Radcot ... the result being a most grievous oppression of the people, a general depopulation of the kingdom, and the sprouting everywhere of seeds of war and strife.

–*Gesta Stephani* trans. Potter 1976, 139

The first archaeological investigation took place in 2007, and subsequently led to a three-day excavation by Wessex Archaeology in 2008. The 2007 trench measured 5m by 2m and cut across the west side of the great tower. This excavation discovered layers of ash within the south-west corner of the tower sealed by a layer of humic loam rich in 13<sup>th</sup>-century Brill/ Boarstall type pottery (Blair 2007, reproduced in Wessex Archaeology 2009, 45). In 2008 seven



trenches were opened, examining the great tower, the entrance on the north of the site, a putative chapel, and an area of post-medieval refortification (Wessex Archaeology 2009, 4). The walls of the great tower were sealed by a layer of mortar, scraped from the masonry used to make the walls and demonstrating the building had been dismantled and the constituent parts carefully handled for reuse. The layer also contained 11<sup>th</sup>- and 12<sup>th</sup>-century pottery ('East Wiltshire' wares), indicating the slighting occurred sometime in the 12<sup>th</sup> century (Wessex Archaeology 2009, 9, 15). The walls were around 3.6m thick, marking this as a significant structure. The Wessex Archaeology report suggested the work was carried out as part of a remodelling of the site in the second half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, when Matthew de Bessilles inherited the manor. The report by Wessex Archaeology (2009, 3) suggested de Bessilles replaced the great tower with a residential tower house, however the location of this structure is unknown. If Matthew de Bessilles had been responsible for dismantling the keep, 13<sup>th</sup>-century pottery identifiable in the demolition layers would have been expected. However, this was restricted to the post-demolition deposits, indicating the demolition took place earlier (Wessex Archaeology 2009, 9). This undermines Wessex Archaeology's interpretation that the reason to dismantle the structure was to replace it with more comfortable accommodation. Instead this indicates the event was closer to 'the Anarchy', and in 1142 the garrison at Radcot loyal to Empress Matilda surrendered to King Stephen (*Gesta Stephani* trans. Potter 1976, 141). The process of dismantling the great tower and clearing off reusable material would have been a time-intensive process therefore pointing towards activity after this event. This changes the interpretation of the event from a peaceful remodelling to a punitive destruction for the owner's role in 'the Anarchy'. The dismantling of the tower may have also been a restorative act: the *Gesta Stephani* claimed that castles such as Radcot sowed the 'seeds of war and strife'. Therefore, slighting the most prominent part of the castle was a public way to restore order.

The mound of **Ascot d'Oilly Castle** (Oxfordshire) was excavated in 1946–47, examining parts of the surrounding ditch and much of the summit (Fig. 4.13a) (Jope & Threlfall 1959, 219, 229–230). The trench profiling the northern section of the ditch discovered two layers of silting, with a layer of rubble on top (Fig. 4.13b). A latrine sump at the northwest corner of the tower had 'little accumulation of soil and vegetation over it', indicating it was still in use



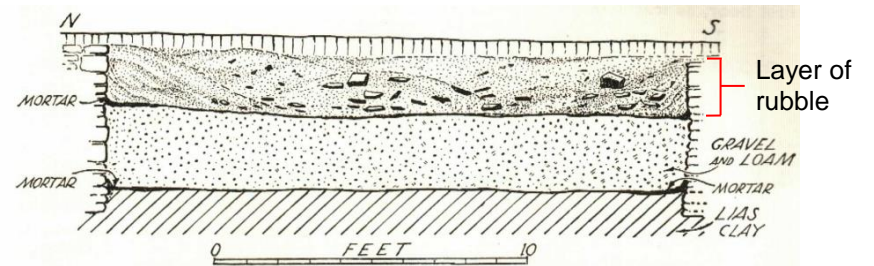
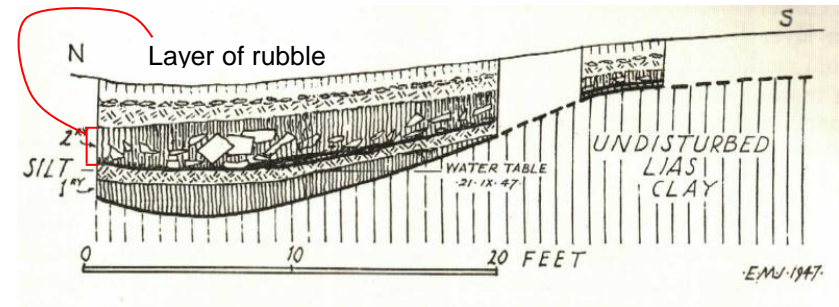
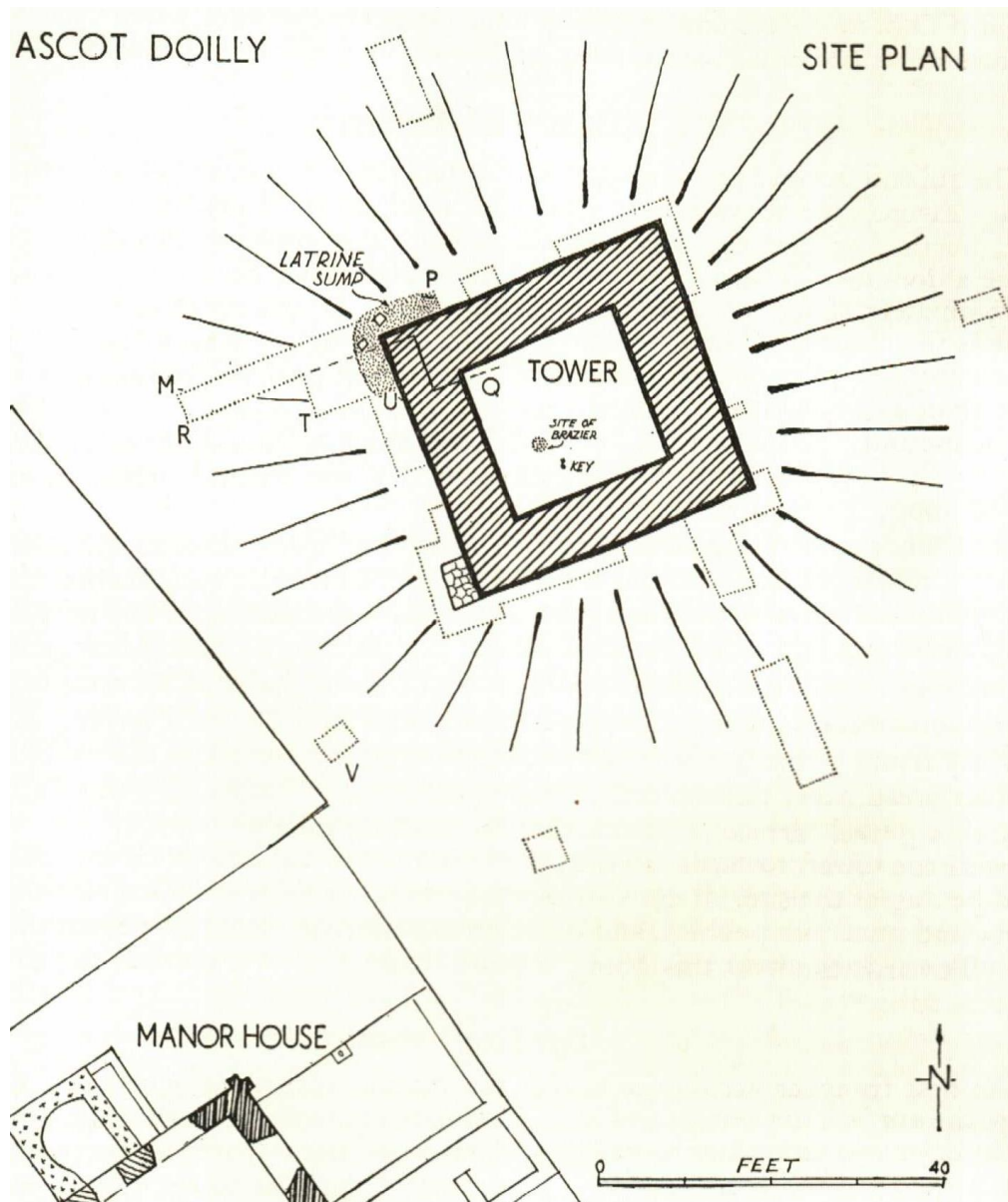


Fig. 4.13a-c (clockwise from left). Diagrams each to different scales. Fig. 4.13a shows the excavated areas of Ascot d'Oilly Castle in 1946 and 1947. Fig. 4.13b is a section across the ditch north of the great tower. Fig. 4.13c is a section north to south across the interior of the great tower. From Jope & Threlfall 1959, 230, 234, 236.

when the castle was slighted. This considered with the local coarseware pottery evidence recovered from the sump indicates the slighting took place before 1200 (Jope & Threlfall 1959, 233). The excavators were keen to suggest demolition shortly after 1175–76 as at this time the owner's property was confiscated by the king for breaking Forest Laws (Jope & Threlfall 1959, 219, 227). Inside the tower further deposits of rubble were found (Fig. 4.13c). Mortar was found inside the tower but not outside and the excavators deduced that the stones had been pulled inwards. The mound was then filled in and smoothed over to create a new surface, on which was found 13<sup>th</sup>-century pottery (Jope & Threlfall 1959, 235–236). The small amount of ashlar indicates that material fit for reuse was removed from the site, which shows the demolition was deliberate rather than collapse from decay and neglect.

The standing structure at **Farnham Castle** (Surrey) is a shell-keep, which replaced a rectangular great tower. The earlier phase was one of six castles built in the mid-12<sup>th</sup> century by Henry de Blois, bishop of Winchester. Excavations in 1958 and 1959 focussed on the interior of the shell-keep and the side of the motte it stood on; they began as trial investigations and expanded to fully investigate a 15m-deep shaft in the centre of the mound. The shell-keep incorporated reused ashlar and the excavator suggested this stone derived from the rectangular great tower (Thompson 1960, 82–83; 86–87). To replace a square great tower with a shell-keep made little sense to Thompson, so he explained this as a reaction to the earlier structure's demolition by someone other than the owner, hence why it was possible to reuse the stone. He did note that Bungay was an example of a castle where a shell-keep was added to an earlier square great tower (see Fig. 3.1) (Thompson 1960, 90–91), but such arrangements are uncommon. Instead Thompson suggested that Farnham was slighted when Henry de Blois' castles were pulled down in 1155. According to Roger of Wendover, the bishop left England without permission and the king took punitive action (Thompson 1960, 90). Ultimately the most likely explanation is that Farnham Castle's great tower was slighted as punishment.

#### **4.2.1 Discussion**

Externally great towers exuded strength and status, and some had 'appearance doors' that could be used during ceremonies to present a high-status individual to large audiences, or commanded views of the seigneurial landscape (Marshall

2012, 233). Elaborate decoration survives on the exterior of Castle Rising (Norfolk) and Norwich's (Norfolk) great tower, while at other sites such as Hedingham have a false top storey to make the structure appear taller without the additional rooms inside (Essex) (Marshall 2016, 160–163). This is most evident in stone structures as they still survive, but the timber great tower was also a symbol of lordly status in the 12<sup>th</sup> century (Marshall 2016, 160). Great towers are now appreciated for their combined functions, for domestic activities such as accommodation or entertaining guests (Thompson 1991, 66–67; McNeil 2006, 45–46; Creighton 2012, 58–61).

By virtue of its height, a great tower was often the most prominent part of a castle, thus making it a focus of attention socially and a preferred target for slighting. Viewshed analysis of early stone castles in Ireland has shown that while proximity to transport routes and water were key considerations in positioning a castle, its visibility was also an important factor in determining where castles were sited (McManama-Kearin 2013, 153). As might be expected for the most socially important building within a castle, and indeed typically the tallest, the visibility of the donjon was also a consideration when choosing the site of a castle (Gregory & Liddiard 2016). While these studies on visibility have examined how the landscape was viewed from the castle as well as how the castle was viewed from the outside, it is the latter which is most relevant to understanding slighting. At Castle Rising and Castle Acre (both in Norfolk) the respective builders chose sites which ensured intervisibility with key landscape features such as gardens, in each case the slopes of the valley approaching the castle, while eschewing sites which granted a greater overall view of the landscape (Gregory & Liddiard 2016, 151–155). It was not a matter of ensuring the greatest area possible could be seen from the castle, but instead choosing which parts of the landscape were important. The medieval awareness of how the castle was presented to visitors and how it was revealed means we can expect that a similar awareness would have been involved in deciding which parts of the castle to slight. This partly explains why great towers occur so frequently in this study.

There is considerable variety in the design of great tower and sweeping statements on how they were used would disguise the granularity within. However, a total of 21 slighted great towers is a significantly large number and indicates that in the medieval period these were particularly important elements

of castles. The reason for this lies in their multifaceted nature. Slighting these buildings served to strip away part of a castle's military, social, and political prowess whilst providing a powerful and public reminder of the punishment inflicted on the owner.

In all the examples discussed, the great towers have been built from stone so the use of fire in 8 out of 21 cases is significant. Evidence of fire within the towers of Brandon, Castell Bryn Amlwg, Castell Carndochan, Dryslwyn, Esslemont, Pontesbury, and Wareham is indicative of burning after hostilities rather than during (and burning was found at Duffield, but outside the tower rather than inside). The difficulty of setting fire to a stone building from the outside while people within are actively attempting to defend the structure demonstrates how rarely it would be successful. What purpose therefore would the burning serve as opposed to other methods? As demonstrated at Brandon Castle materials were often reused where possible. Burning limited this resource and put emphasis on the act of destruction. Perhaps it is significant that the smoke from the fire would have been far more visible than workman using picks, heightening the social impact of destruction. In the case of Duffield Castle, Cox (1887, 176) suggested that fire may have been the method of choice when the force on hand was small, lacking tools, or unskilled. This contrasts with Framlingham where Henry II sent his engineer to oversee the slighting of the castle. The relative simplicity of using fire in terms of the materials use, the manpower and even expertise needed as opposed to picking or digging would explain why 10 of the 17 intra-mural areas examined in Chapter 4.4 produced evidence of burning. It would have been easier for fire to spread in these areas and there may have been more combustible materials. Slighting was not an easy task, but it could be carried out by both those with the time and resources to ensure destruction was complete and those for whom time was of the essence. Creating a fire within a stone tower would have had a different effect to burning a timber castle. The walls would prevent the heat from becoming dispersed, while doorways and windows would have sucked in air to fuel the fire. The combination of this would have created a fiercer fire than a timber structure burning, with the smoke and flames visible from a great distance – especially into the night. Stone towers especially would often have been not just the focus of the castle, but the largest and most important structures in the locality. Using a highly visual method of slighting as opposed to

mining was likely intentional as it created a powerful and immediate statement visible for miles around that the owner of the castle had their property damaged, their ability to seek retribution hampered, and their status diminished.

Importantly in the case of Bedford, destruction can be inferred from a rubble spread down the side of the motte rather than direct excavation of the site of the building itself. Bungay gives a rare example of mining. The use of mining as opposed to dismantling the great tower would have reduced the amount of material which could be reused. This places greater emphasis on the role of slighting as a form of punishment. The position of the tunnel was such that it would have collapsed one corner of the tower, but destruction did not need to be total to diminish the use of the site and convey the message that the owner was being punished. The gaping wound would have left the great tower impractical militarily or domestically, while the obvious damage would have been a visible reminder of the actions of the Earl of Norfolk that led to the destruction. When Rochester's great tower was repaired after King John undermined it during a siege the new work was done in a different style, with a round turret added instead of a square one (Brown 1969, 14–15). The different design however was a visible scar and the damage evokes Skinner's (2015) observation that a scar on a prestigious man was socially damaging. Though Rochester's damage was inflicted during battle, the parallels with other forms of demolition are clear. In *Early European Castles*, Creighton (2012, 61–62) noted 'the slighting and desecration of a donjon could in certain instances mark the discontinuity of lordship'. This is the case across periods as the great tower at Kenilworth was slighted following the English Civil War with the demolition of a single external face (Johnson 2002, 174).

Overall these slighting of great towers took place in the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries for England and Wales, and 14<sup>th</sup> century for Scotland. For the likes of Bungay and Farnham documentary evidence plays a key role in dating the activity. Bedford, Brandon, Bungay, and Farnham were all owned by rebels at the time of their destruction. It is possible that Castell Bryn Amlwg may reflect internal politics or border warfare rather than punishment from a higher authority, but this is unclear. Most of the 21 great towers were abandoned after they were slighted, and only Bothwell, Coull, Dudley, Farnham, Ludgershall, and Rushen were repaired or rebuilt, even though Bothwell and Coull were 'low

quality'. The low number is likely because rebuilding a building as prestigious as a great tower would have been very expensive.

### **4.3 The treatment of mottes and their associated features**

For many castles all that remains are earthworks: grassy mounds in the landscape marking where elite places of administration and power once stood. Timber or stone superstructures surmounted these earthworks, and while they ranged from timber watchtowers to stone keeps they both shared the important factor of being highly visible. As Cathcart King (1988, 47–48) put it, a motte 'is an inert mass ... It cannot itself be inhabited or defended, and is always an adjunct to its associated constructions of timber, brick or stone'. However, for the archaeologist they are a trove of information. The ditches often contain important dating evidence while the summit may have been the focus of high-status activity. It is, therefore, unsurprising that a significant proportion of excavations examine the motte or its associated ditch. To demonstrate how prevalent this castle feature is, a study by Cathcart King (1972, 102, 104) identified 741 mottes in England and Wales, with 473 in the former and 268 in the latter.

As seen in the previous section, great towers were sometimes built on top of mottes but they were by no means ubiquitous and only Bedford provided evidence of the motte itself being truncated. On occasion mottes might be truncated in the course of remodelling the castle as mentioned in Chapter 3.3.1, and could appear as a slighting episode, however the available evidence suggests this was not common. Where earthworks were adapted or reduced in the process of modifying a site they were more likely to be regular to allow for continued use. While this leaves the possibility for false positives, only Bedford and Framlingham provided evidence for major truncation of a motte, and at Groby and Channellsbrook the irregular surviving earthworks suggest slighting rather than adaptation.

This section examines how mottes and their superstructures were treated and the evidence from their ditches of destruction in this area of the castle. For the most part, ditch fills contained rubble or burnt material. A second, less common group provided evidence of the motte itself being cut into as part of the destruction. Structures on top of the motte may also have been targeted

for destruction. Searching for cases of mottes being demolished produced the following results.

Table 4.3. Castles with slighted mottes.

Name	County	OS grid reference	Date slighted	Method of destruction	Reference
Arkholme	Lancashire	SD589718	Uncertain	Picking; burning	White 1975
Bedford <sup>6</sup>	Bedfordshire	TL053497	1224	Picking	Baker <i>et al.</i> 1979a
Castlehill of Strachan	Aberdeenshire	NO657921	1308–1320	Burning; digging	Yeoman 1984
Channellsbrook	Sussex	TQ188334	Uncertain	Digging	Braun 1936
Framlingham	Suffolk	TM287637	1174-5	Picking; digging	Coad 1972
Duffield	Derbyshire	SK343441	After 1250	Burning	Manby 1959
Great Easton	Essex	TL609254	Mid-12 <sup>th</sup> century	Digging	Allen & Walker forthcoming
Groby	Leicestershire	SK524076	1170s	Digging	Wessex Archaeology 2011
Hen Blas	Flintshire	SJ222735	13 <sup>th</sup> century, first quarter	Burning	Leach 1957
Ingleston Motte	Dumfries and Galloway	NX775580	1185	Burning	Gaimster <i>et al.</i> 1998
Leicester	Leicestershire	SK583041	1170s	Picking	Clarke 1956
Pleshey	Essex	TL665144	Before 1200	Digging	Youngs & Clark 1982
Rudgwick	Surrey	TQ077345	12 <sup>th</sup> century onwards	Burning	Winbolt 1930
South Mimms	Middlesex	TL230026	1170–80	Digging; burning	Kent, Renn & Streeten 20013
Sycharth	Denbighshire	SJ205259	1403	Burning	Hague & Warhurst 1966
Weston Turville	Buckinghamshire	SP859104	Late 11 <sup>th</sup> or early 12 <sup>th</sup> century	Digging	Yeoman 1986

<sup>6</sup> Bedford's motte and keep and keep are discussed together in section 4.2.

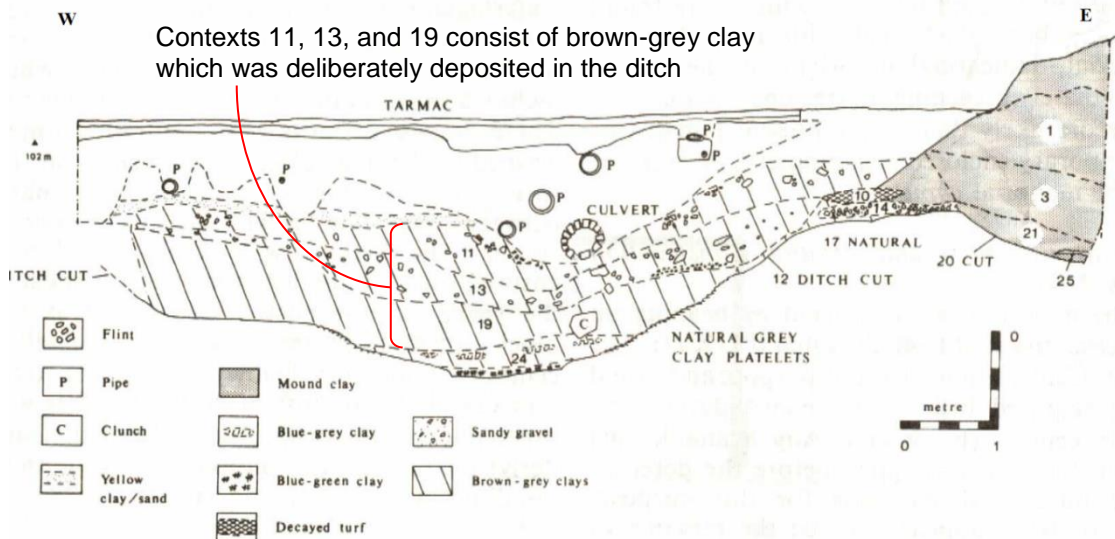
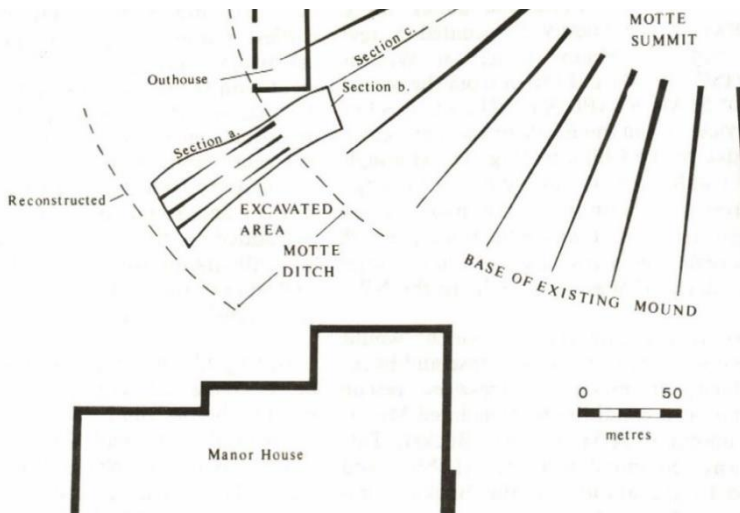
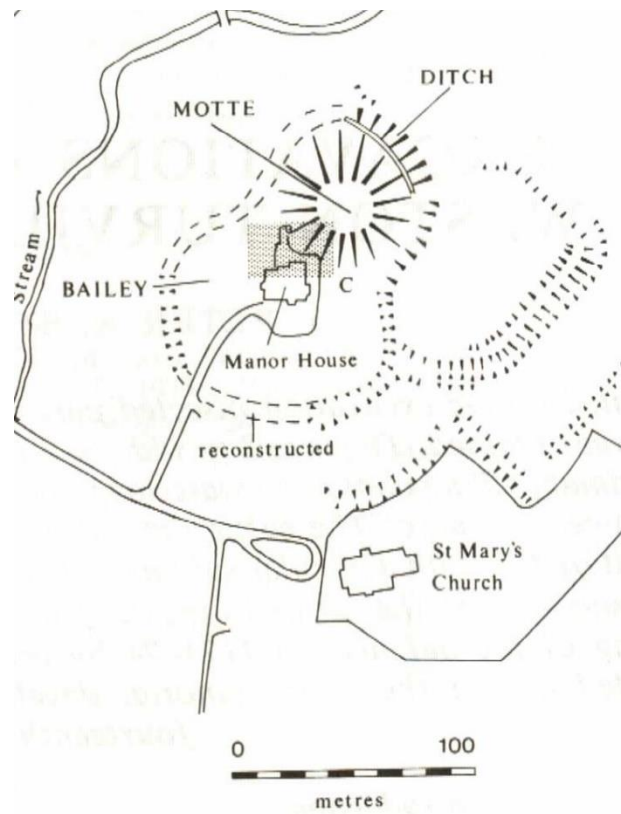
In the 1170s Robert Blanchemains, Earl of Leicester was one of four leading earls in England to support Henry the Young King in his rebellion against Henry II (Warren 1973, 118–123). Henry II emerged victorious and ordered the destruction of the Earl of Leicester's castles, including that at **Leicester** (Leicestershire). Excavations in 1949 across the motte ditch uncovered the feature to its full depth (Fig. 3.3), though modern activity had truncated the upper parts (Clarke 1956, 25). A layer of rubble was found and, quite reasonably given the documented history, the excavator attributed it to the slighting of 1170s. Of particular interest in this case is that there is clear evidence of the ditch being re-cut after this destruction (marked on Fig. 3.3). The re-cut was not noted in the report in the 1956 *Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society*. However, the re-excavation of the ditch, albeit at not to the original depth is an attempt to restore the defences of the site. It was evidently acceptable to refortify the site, demonstrating that slighting was not a solely military concern. It had social connotations which had already been conveyed by the time the castle's defences were repaired.

At **Weston Turville** (Buckinghamshire) the nature of the ditch fill indicated deliberate demolition. The only excavation at the site was a small-scale rescue excavation in 1985, consisting of a single 9m by 3m trench (Yeoman 1986, 169–171). The mound consists of Gault Clay which is very stable and resistant to erosion. As such the primary fill of the ditch surrounding the motte consisted only of thin layers of clay (context 24 in Fig. 4.14). This was followed by three thicker deposits of clay – layers 19, 13, and 11 in order of deposition. As the makeup of the mound is stable, the thick deposits suggest the ditch was filled intentionally (Yeoman 1986, 174). Despite the fact context 19 contained 35 sherds of pottery dating to the late 11<sup>th</sup> or early 12<sup>th</sup> centuries the excavator suggested this likely correlates with the order to slight the castle in 1173–74 (Yeoman 1986, 174, 177). Context 13 produced 224 sherds of pottery, which judging from the pottery report proved harder to date. All this creates a complex picture of activity at Weston Turville.

The excavator's interpretation requires re-examination as the excavated evidence does not match the documented order to slight the castle. Because of the stability of the clay soil, this thesis proposes that context 19 should be considered an undocumented example of deliberate infilling, dated to the late



Fig. 4.14. Plan of the rescue excavations at Weston Turville Castle. The shaded area on the right indicates the detailed area below. At the bottom is the section of the ditch surrounding the motte. From Yeoman 1986, 170, 172.



11<sup>th</sup> or early 12<sup>th</sup> century. The documented history of the site indicates that it was reused as a castle after the destruction event. It is possible that context 13 may therefore represent the impact of Henry II's instruction to demolish the castle in 1173–74, though the ceramic evidence is inconclusive. Alternatively, the late 11<sup>th</sup>-century date is also possible. After the Norman Conquest of England Odo, Bishop of Bayeux, was granted Weston Turville; he sub-infeudated the area and it was held by a man recorded only as Roger (Page 1908, 365–3; Yeoman 1986, 177). Odo supported Robert Curthose in the succession crisis of 1088, fought between Robert and William Rufus; Odo was unsuccessful and as a result was exiled and his lands confiscated (Bates 2004). It is conceivable that Roger supported Odo and therefore Robert Curthose in the rebellion. While it is not documented that Weston Turville Castle was slighted, this episode certainly provides an appropriate social situation for slighting. Having faced rebellion from a once influential ally William would have wanted to reassert his own authority. As discussed in Chapter 1, destruction has a long-established history as a tool used in power struggles, and even at this stage it is unlikely that castle slighting would have been revolutionary. While the motte ditch was not re-excavated, Yeoman (1986, 178) observed that the bailey was enlarged, indicating continued use as a manorial centre. This would be consistent with the implied re-use of the site if it had been slighted in the late 11<sup>th</sup> century as it was clearly once again in use in the 1170s when Henry II ordered its destruction. This scenario is as plausible as slighting in the 1170s, also followed by a period of adaptation of the castle, and overall the situation emphasises the need to approach documentary evidence with caution when attempting to match it to the archaeological record. The disparity between the ceramic evidence and the documented slighting in the reign of Henry II means we should consider other options when interpreting the biography of the site.

Interestingly the excavator also suggested that two voussoirs (segments of a door-arch) recovered from the motte ditch probably derived from a chapel or possibly a hall that was demolished when the castle was slighted (Yeoman 1986, 177). While the presence of the voussoirs indicates a stone-built structure the plain design makes further interpretation problematic. As this chapter notes later it was very unusual for a hall or chapel to be included in a castle's slighting, so this instance merits further excavation to establish where this

building was located, how it was used, and whether it was demolished when the castle was slighted.

Reports on excavations at **Pleshey Castle** (Essex) were included in the journals of *Medieval Archaeology* at intervals from 1960 until 1988. Unfortunately, while a British Archaeological Report covered the work from 1959 to 1963, the results of later excavations have not been published. This means we are reliant on the interim reports in *Medieval Archaeology* where evidence of slighting was discovered after 1963. In 1981, a trench in the ditch around the motte (Fig. 4.15) discovered the first cutting was deliberately backfilled, though it was later re-cut. A bridge built c. 1200 sealed part of the infill (Youngs & Clark 1982, 183). The excavators therefore reasonably assumed that this destruction event correlated with the slighting ordered in 1158 before being returned to the Mandeville family in William, heir of Geoffrey II de Mandeville who had the castle confiscated during 'the Anarchy'.

When Hugh Bigod, earl of Norfolk was mentioned earlier it was noted that in retaliation for a failed rebellion, Henry II ordered the demolition of his castles. As has been demonstrated, Bungay Castle was spared the worst of the damage, but **Framlingham Castle** (Suffolk; Fig. 4.16) was not so fortunate. In 1174–75, the king despatched Alnoth, one of his master engineers, to oversee the operation at Framlingham (Brown 1950, 137). The Pipe Rolls record payment 'for pulling down Framlingham Castle £7 10s 6d' but do not specify what the work involved or which bits of the castle were slighted (*Pipe Rolls* 22 Henry II, 60). To say the king felt the task was important would be an



Fig. 4.15. The motte at Pleshey Castle. Held by Geoffrey II de Mandeville during 'the Anarchy', Henry II gave orders to slight the castle in 1157–58. The site was later repaired and reused. Photo by Richard Nevell.

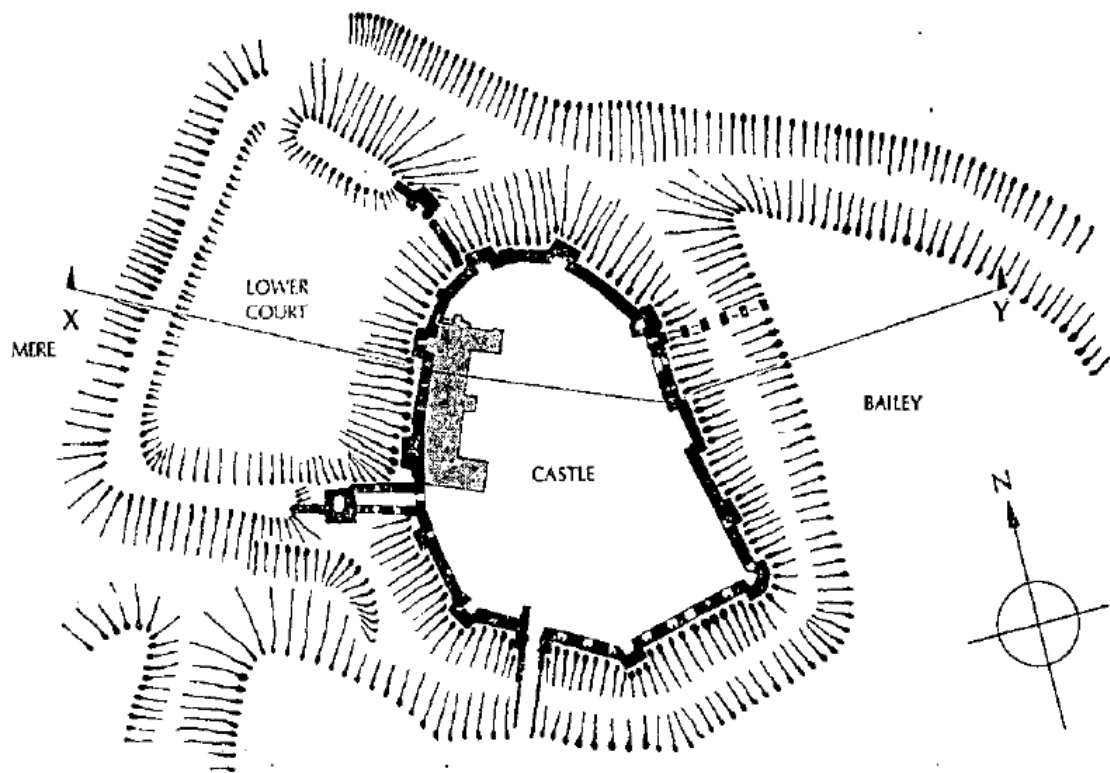


Fig. 4.16. Framlingham Castle was demolished in the 1170s and subsequently rebuilt. The first castle was probably a motte and bailey. From Coad 1972, 154.

understatement. So can the archaeology corroborate the events recorded in the Pipe Rolls? Excavations within the castle's inner courtyard between 1969 and 1970 encountered very deep make up layers. A trench 13ft deep was unable to find the original ground level. This prompted the excavator to suggest these layers were the traces of a raised platform or mound which had been levelled and spread across the site (Coad 1972, 159). As Coad suggested, a motte is the most likely explanation given the period, and Allen Brown had previously speculated the castle when slighted in the 1170s was a motte and bailey. Make up layers are not uncommon in castles, but the sheer depth was indicative of a substantial earthwork being slighted.

**Groby Castle** (Leicestershire) was owned by the Earl of Leicester and most likely was amongst the earl's castles that were slighted after he supported Henry the Young King in his failed rebellion against Henry II in 1173–74. The mound is 5–6m high and at ground level it is oval-shaped – not unusual for a motte – and measures 38m by 25m (Wessex Archaeology 2011, 1). However, the shape of the summit does not match the base of the motte and is kidney-shaped (Fig. 3.9). The most significant discovery of the excavation was the presence of a stone structure within the mound (Creighton 1997, 22–24). This unusual shape is not a result of erosion, and neither is it typical of treasure

seekers who would more likely leave small pits. Therefore, the most probable reason is that it was an attempt to explicitly damage the motte. Time Team excavated at Groby in 2010, with a trench on the summit of the motte (Wessex Archaeology 2011, 11). The report by Wessex Archaeology was emphatic that the disturbance to the motte was not caused by slighting and the depression was the result of quarrying the mound away to reach the stone of the building within as it was back filled with a single deposit of clay (Wessex Archaeology 2011, 11, 31). If the intention was to slight the motte, why dig part of it away only to fill it in again? It is possible the filling took place substantially later, perhaps as part of a landscaping project, and some rubble from the walls constituted a primary fill but there was no indication of silting. While there were no finds that indicated the mound was left open, the explanation is not entirely satisfactory as filling in the cut after quarrying would not have been necessary. Moreover, it is unlikely the site would have been quarried unless stone was visible. Since the structure was embedded in the motte it is probably the slighting of the 1170s exposed part of the structure, meaning the motte was at least partially truncated. The cut could then have been expanded by quarrying and effectively lost to the archaeological record. While the evidence is not unequivocal as it once was, the motte at Groby should still be considered evidence of slighting.

Mutilation of a motte can sometimes be recognised without the need for excavation. At **Channellsbrook Castle** (Sussex) as early as the mid-1930s Braun (1936, 253) recognised the hollow in the mound represented a deliberate act of demolition. The motte, already sub-rectangular to begin with, has a crescent-shaped depression in the northern part of its summit (Fig. 4.17). Ruling out possible slumping is a spoil heap to the north of this depression, no doubt the material from the motte. A small scale-excavation on the site in 1989 focussed on part of the moat but failed to offer dating evidence for activity at the castle or provide further information relating to its slighting (Place 1989, 4–7).

Extensive amounts of burnt material were found on the summit of **Ingleston Motte** (Dumfries and Galloway) during excavation. The excavators noted this most likely represents the firing of a timber tower. Though there have been 13 seasons of excavation at Ingleston, a final report is absent so the best information available is from reports to *Discovery and Excavation in Scotland* or *Medieval Archaeology*. No dating evidence was discovered, but a destruction



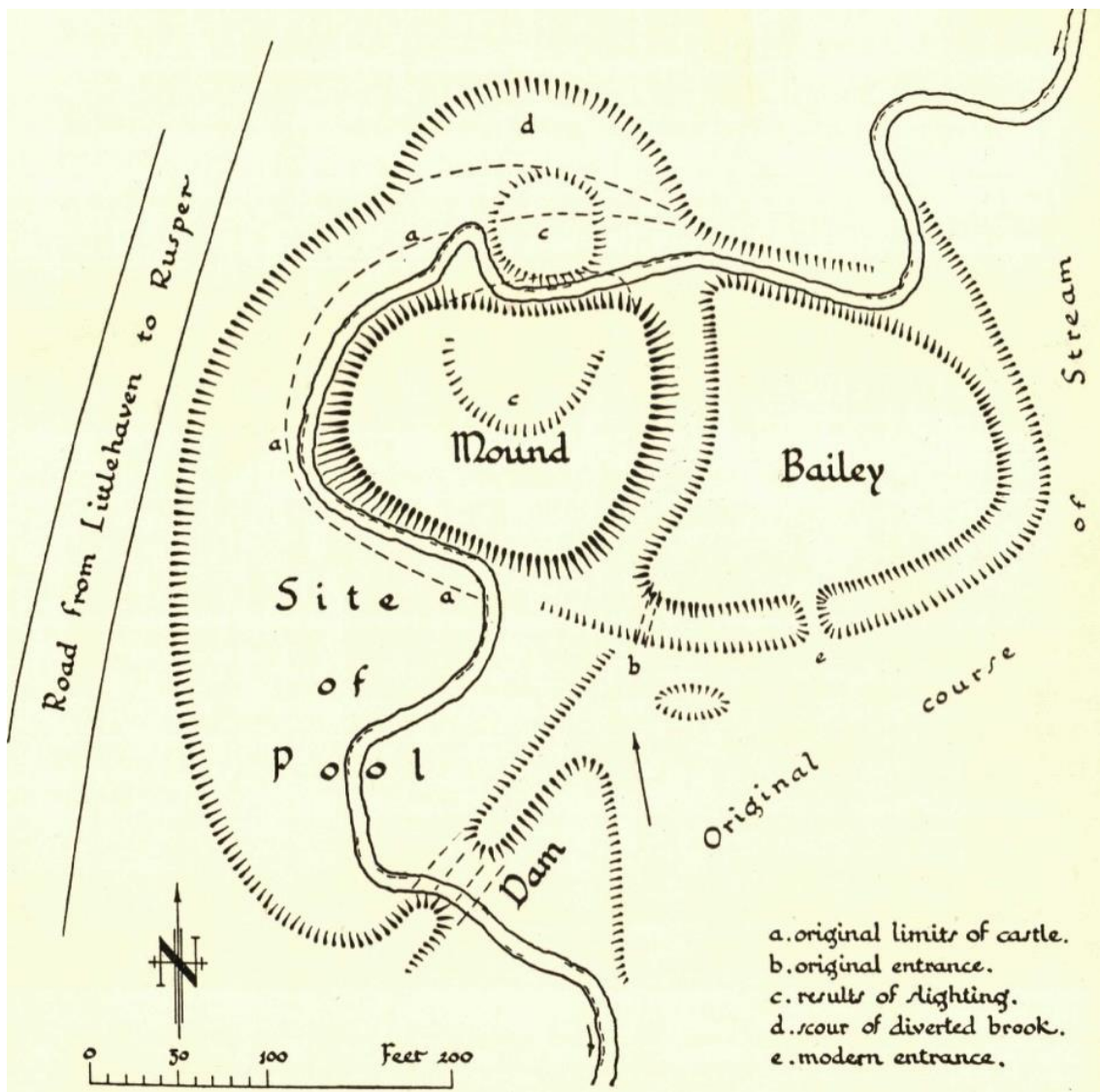


Fig. 4.17. The motte-and-bailey castle of Channellsbrook. Note the semi-circular depression in the motte, and the corresponding smaller mound to the north. From Braun 1936, 250.

date of 1185 was suggested based on local upheaval when Roland of Galloway invaded (Gaimster *et al.* 1998, 173). Unlike with a stone tower such as Brandon which should not have been particularly susceptible to fire, a wooden structure could be set alight from the outside. Notoriously, this is something seen in the Bayeux Tapestry where attackers are attempting to set fire to the palisade around the great tower of Château de Dinan (Jones 1999, 171). It is logical that fire would be used to damage the structure, while those inside attempted to put it out. Fire might therefore be an effective way of weakening or severely damaging a structure, but the defenders would most likely surrender before the structure was entirely destroyed. Even if those defending the tower were unlucky in this regard, the destruction itself would send a powerful statement. Balanced against this is the account of Brough Castle (Cumberland) where according to 12<sup>th</sup>-century chronicler Jordan Fantosme in 1174 the great tower

was set alight during a siege and one man held out, throwing down spears and stakes (1999, 28–30). The lone soldier was unusual, and his comrades had already surrendered. At Inglestone Motte the severity of the burning indicates that it was deliberately set and unopposed. It is, therefore, the interpretation of this thesis that the complete destruction of the timber tower on top of the mound was slighting rather than an act of military expediency.

When Owain Glendower rebelled against English rule in Wales in 1400 the retaliating English deliberately burnt his main holding in Wales. This was documented in a letter written by Prince Henry, later King Henry V, in May 1403 to his father Henry IV detailing how he marched on **Sycharth Castle** (Denbighshire) and on finding it empty he set fire to the castle and ravaged the countryside (Hague & Warhurst 1966, 112–113). The H.E.R. indicates the first and only excavations on the site took place in 1962–63. This work focussed on the motte, excavating a quarter of its summit and opening a section into the ditch (CPAT 2014). A poem of 1390 mentioned a hall on top of a mount. So when two timber structures were discovered on top of the motte the excavators assumed one of them must be a hall (Hague & Warhurst 1966, 109–113). A drystone wall was found to support burnt pieces of oak, while within the internal area daub and more burnt oak was discovered. A silver penny dated c. 1350–1360 indicates activity at the site in the second half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, suggested the evidence of destruction related to the event recorded by Prince Henry, rather than some other undocumented occurrence (Hague & Warhurst 1966, 118, 125). Since Glendower clearly had no intention of using Sycharth militarily during the revolt, the destruction was demonstrably punitive. The poem of 1390 celebrating Sycharth shows how Glendower's identity was bound with the castle, so destroying the building directly attacked his prestige. His lordly authority was undermined even further when Prince Henry burned other houses in the area. Doing so was a statement that Owain Glendower could not protect the inhabitants; by attacking the Welsh rebel's most prestigious estate he sought to undermine his authority. Parallels can be drawn with Lancaster, which in 1389 was owned by the crown and was raided by Scots. In 1399 when Henry IV became king, as well as holding the Duchy of Lancaster, he rebuilt the monumental 20m tall gatehouse that still stands today (Champness 1993, 6–9). To have the area still vulnerable to Scottish attacks would have been an embarrassment, and in counteracting this he constructed a formidable

gatehouse that dominated the town. The destruction of Sycharth Castle would have been a blow to Glendower's status.

In 1964–66 at **Great Easton** (Essex) the moat around the motte was excavated, as well as another ditch discovered just to the south. The discovery of pottery allowed the excavators to date the filling of these features to the mid-12<sup>th</sup> century; both ditches contained a layer of natural clay initially excavated when the moat was first dug, and later used as infill. Immediately underneath the clay layer in the ditch were deposits containing charcoal and ash, perhaps indicating that a timber structure on the site had been burned (Allen & Walker forthcoming). As discussed previously clay is a stable material so it likely to have been deposited deliberately. It is entirely possible the clay filling the ditch represents the truncation of the motte. This combined with the use of fire suggests the castle was slighted.

Very little has been published about **Rudgwick Castle** (Surrey), however the site was excavated in the late 1920s and a short report produced. The discovery of three fragments of 12<sup>th</sup>-century pottery broadly dated activity at the site. Importantly from the perspective of this study was the discovery of a charcoal layer in the motte ditch beneath dumped deposits. This led the excavator to conclude that once the site was 'of no more use' it was dismantled, burned, and the earthworks levelled (Winbolt 1930, 96–97). The unusual interpretation may simply be because the author was writing when there was a good deal less archaeological evidence against which Rudgwick could be compared. The lifecycle many sites go through indicates that abandonment and neglect would be the more likely fate for a castle no longer considered useful, or perhaps the ramparts might be levelled if the area was suitable for agriculture. This thesis proposes that the use of fire combined with the deliberate filling of the ditch means that the event should be considered slighting.

Excavations at **South Mimms Castle** (Middlesex) between 1960 and 1991 (Fig. 4.18) established that the structure was built in the 12<sup>th</sup> century during which period the manor was owned by the de Mandeville family (Kent, Renn & Streeten 2013: v). The work examined the summit of the motte, a segment of the associated ditch, with additional trenches across the entrance to the castle and in the bailey (Kent, Renn & Streeten 2013, 11–12). The motte and its ditch produced evidence of the castle being slighted. Excavations within the timber tower which stood within the motte discovered a charcoal spread and



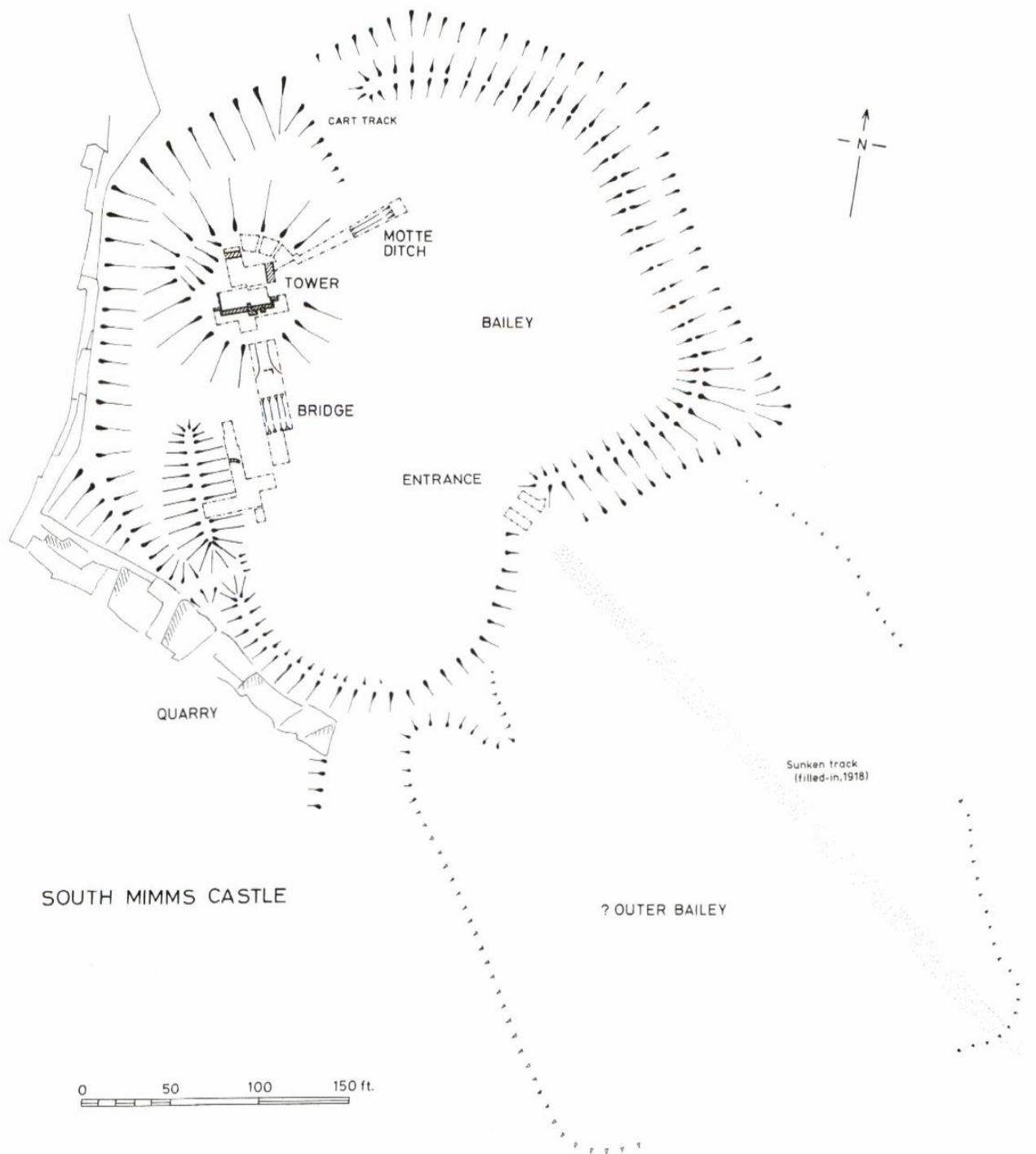


Fig. 4.18. Excavations at South Mimms Castle. From Kent, Renn & Streefen 2013, 11.

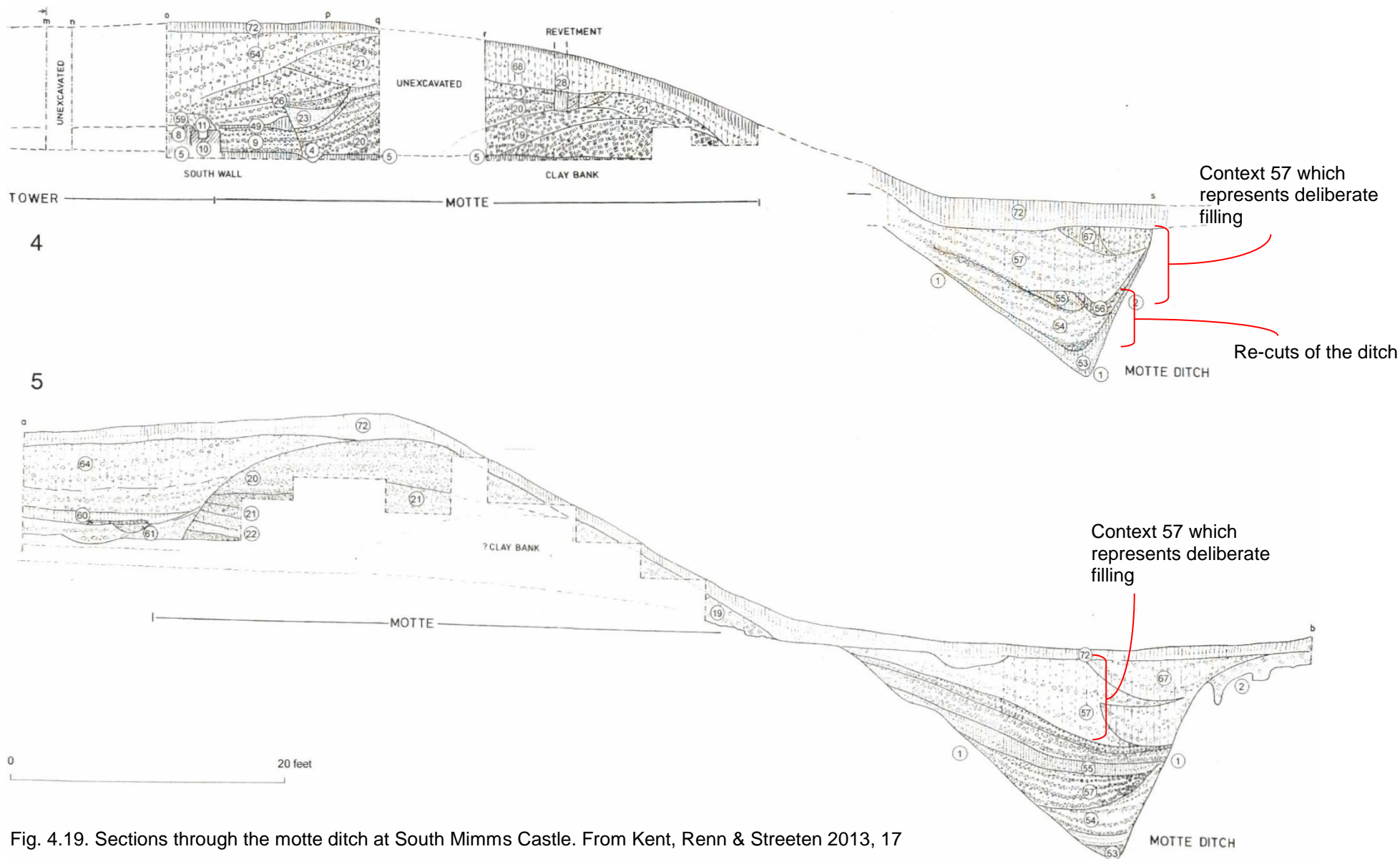


Fig. 4.19. Sections through the motte ditch at South Mimms Castle. From Kent, Renn & Streeten 2013, 17

Note that in the lower of the two ditch sections, the context number from primary fill to most recent is [53], [54], [57], [55], [57]. This appears to be an error in labelling as confirmed by the written discussion of the deposits on page 23. The correct labelling is [53], [54], [55], [56], [57].

a small amount of melted sheet lead. The charcoal was close to the alignment of a partition within the timber tower, making it unlikely to have been a hearth. The implication is this might be evidence of destruction by fire (Kent, Renn & Streeten 2013, 20–21). According to the excavation report ditch layers 54 to 57 (Fig. 4.19) represent deliberate filling of the motte ditch, dated to the 12<sup>th</sup> century by 58.9kg of pottery from the ditch (Kent, Renn & Streeten 2013, 23–24, 47). Some of the pottery could date to around 1170 or 1180, so it is unlikely to have been amongst the Mandeville castles destroyed in the 1150s along with Pleshey and Saffron Walden (Kent, Renn & Streeten 2013, 38). The excavators identified a single destruction event, however, the upper half of the ditch fill in Fig. 4.19 indicates the ditch was re-excavated (context 56 is likely to be silting) before the chalk rubble that makes up context 57 (similar to context 54) was deposited, indicating two separate slightings may have taken place. The sheer depth of context 57 in particular indicates it was deliberately deposited as part of the castle slighting.

**Castlehill of Strachan** (Kincardineshire) consists of a motte constructed around 1250, and trial excavations failed to locate evidence of an associated bailey (Yeoman 1984, 318, 336). Two seasons of excavations in 1980 and 1981 examined the motte's summit and surrounding ditch (see Fig. 4.20). Evidence of a destructive event was found in both areas. On top of the mound timbers which had formed a palisade were found to have been removed from their original position and burnt on the site (Yeoman 1984, 336). Three trenches across the ditch revealed a deposit of rubble sealed by a deposit of sandy loam mixed with charcoal. The ditch was almost completely filled as a result (Yeoman 1984, 322–323, 336, 342). The pottery from the destruction phase was dated c. 1308–1320 (Yeoman 1984, 354). In this context, the excavator proposed that the likely explanation was that Robert Bruce was responsible for the slighting of the castle in 1308 when he was marching against the English in the area (Yeoman 1984, 318). The burning of the palisade was a deliberate act since the timbers were moved from their original position and then burnt. The sandy loam mixed with charcoal in the ditch is likely connected to the destruction of the palisade, and the rubble indicates a stone structure was destroyed beforehand. The lack of an intervening context such as a turf layer indicates these events happened close together, and since they are both destructive it is likely they were both

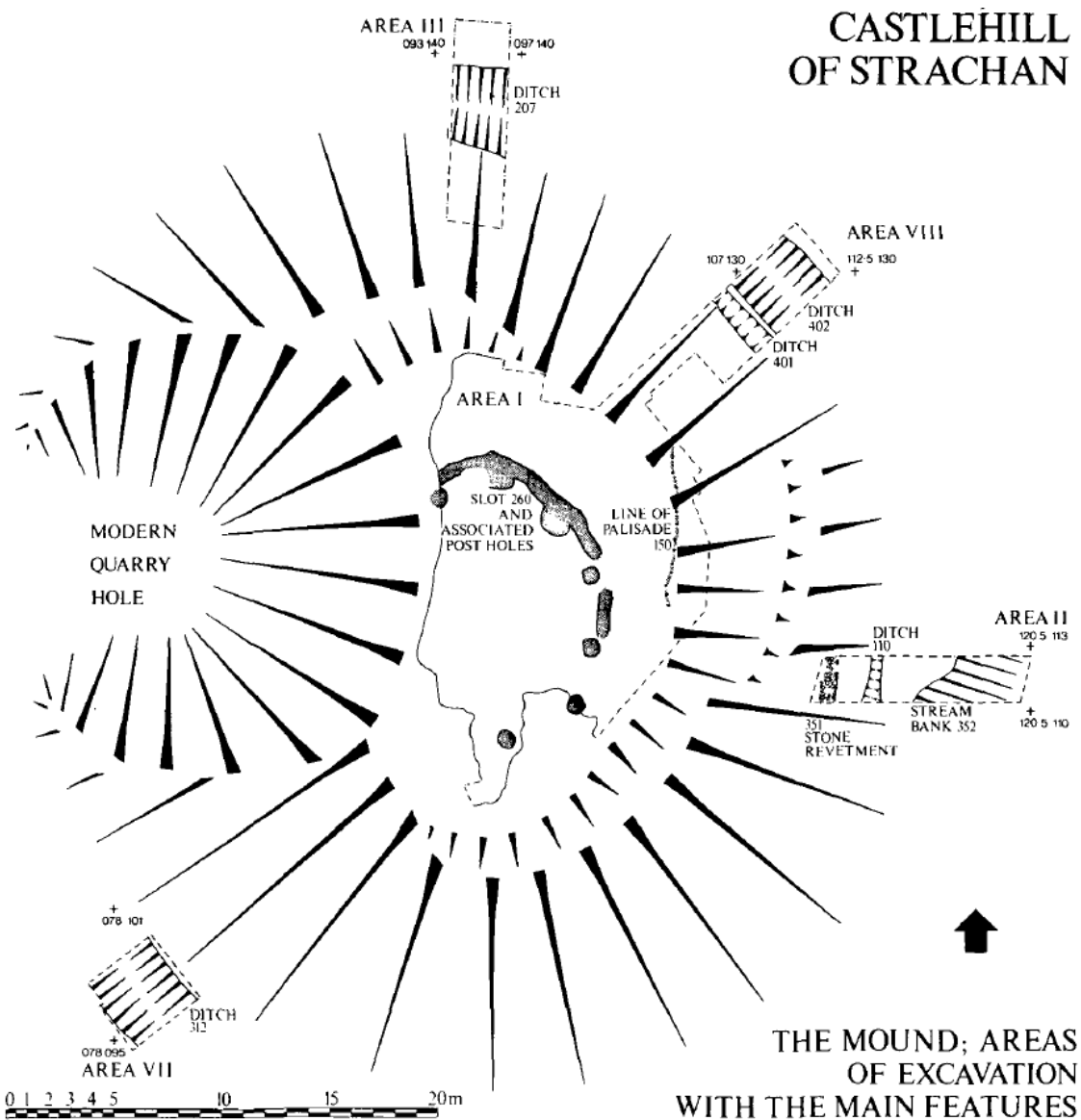


Fig. 4.20. The plan of the 1980–81 excavations at Castlehill of Strachan. From Yeoman 1984, 337.

part of the same attempt to slight the castle. The two different methods of destruction add further weight to this thesis' interpretation that this was intentional slighting as opposed to accident or natural decay.

The excavation at **Duffield Castle** (Derbyshire) in 1957 was the first work on the site for more than 70 years. As well as reopening part of the great tower excavated in 1886, a total of nine other trenches were excavated on the southwest side of the motte and in its ditch (Manby 1959, 2). In particular trenches I and III, roughly 10m apart, produced corresponding layers of charcoal close to the surface (Fig. 4.21). These trenches were placed at the top of the motte near the edge, and showed the layer of charcoal began to follow the curve of the mound downwards, but were not replicated in the ditch. While the ditch could not be completely excavated because it was waterlogged, it

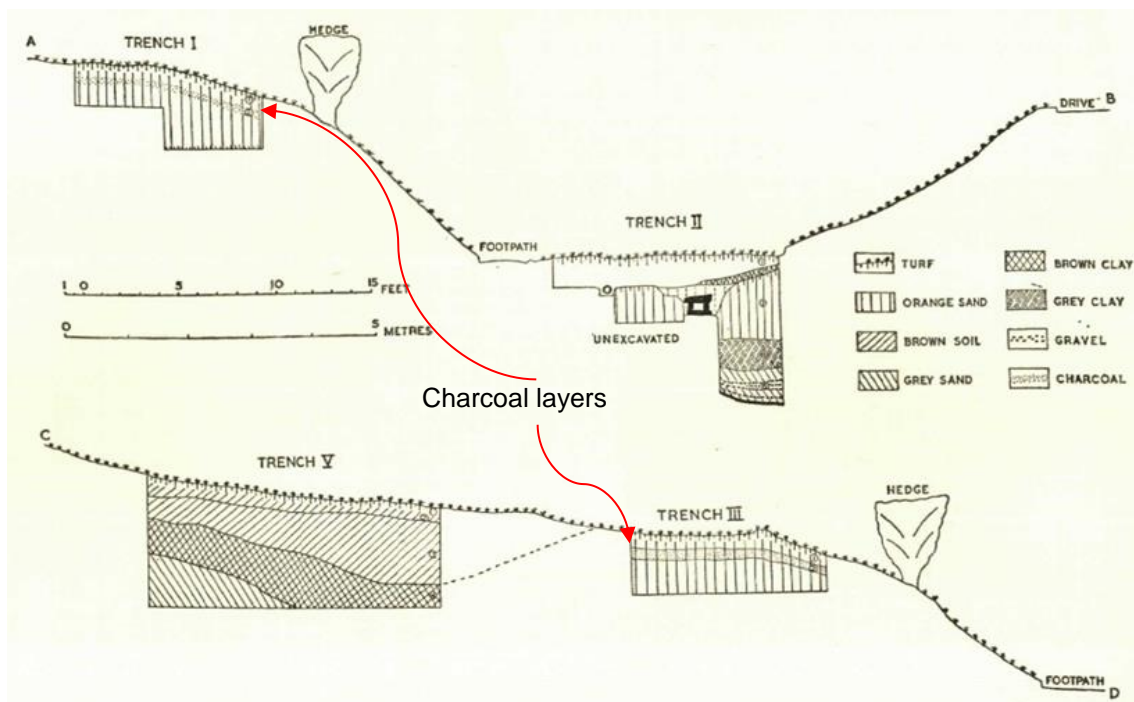


Fig. 4.21. Section of trenches I, II, III, and V at Duffield Castle. Trenches I and III had matching layers of charcoal. From Manby 1959, 4.

appears that the charcoal was concentrated on top of the mound (Manby 1959, 2–6). The excavator does not link this activity to the slighting evidenced by the 1886 excavation, but as this was a late phase of activity at Duffield Castle, the inescapable conclusion is this is further evidence of the 13<sup>th</sup>-century demolition of the castle.

So far most of these examples have found evidence for the destruction of structures on or around the motte but in other cases the motte itself was the focus of destruction. At the following sites manpower was spent mutilating the earthworks themselves. At **Hen Blas** (Flintshire) the northern part of the site was excavated in 1954–56 and a layer of charcoal 1–4 inches thick was discovered in part of the motte ditch. Coins from the first quarter of the 13<sup>th</sup> century were found in this charcoal layer, while pottery from the ditch fill was dated to the mid-13<sup>th</sup> century. The charcoal was mostly birch, and in the excavators' opinion the timber from the site was gathered and placed in the ditch and then burned. After this, a thick layer of clay was deposited, almost completely filling the ditch (Leach 1957, 2–3, 6, 8). The motte has an unusual profile, with a ditch on the west side and a sloping summit gradually declining to ground level on the east side with no visible ditch. While the excavator did not expound this, the section drawing of the mound from his report illustrates the effect (Fig. 4.22). It is therefore the conclusion of this thesis that the unusual

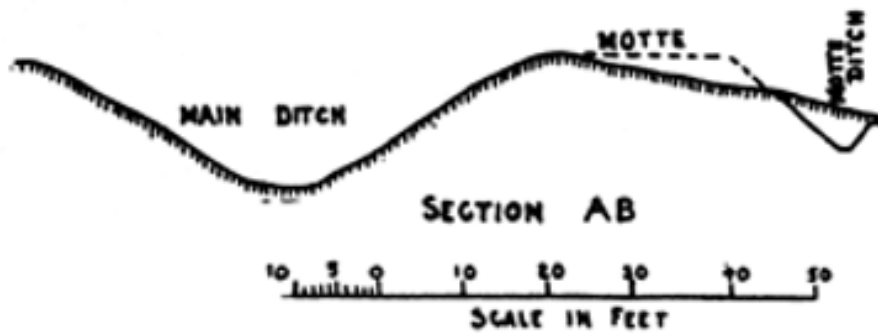


Fig. 4.22. The profile of Hen Blas' motte, with west on the left and east on the right. Leach 1957, 5.

motte profile is further evidence of slighting. A gradient of 1:5 would simply have been too steep for a practical surface within a castle.

The two-phase motte at **Arkholme** (Lancashire) belongs to the group of sites exposed to fire. Excavations at the base of the motte discovered two tip lines of cobbles with the soil above and below was indistinguishable (White 1975, 26–27). The reason the soil was indistinguishable could reasonably be because it was dumped at the same time, suggesting it was deliberate rather than the result of weathering. The area is not agricultural, making it unlikely the ditches were filled to facilitate farming. The situation is made more complex by the first phase at Arkholme, which seems to have ended in fire. Around 1905 a shaft was dug into the motte and found the earlier surface, the pavement of which was demarcated by burnt stones and a layer of ash (Anon 1905, 309). It is not possible to date the potential demolition of the site, but the combination of two forms of destruction – burning and infilling – makes it likely that this represents deliberate slighting.

#### 4.3.1 Discussion

Mottes and their associated ditches have produced some of the most interesting and tantalising evidence for the archaeology of castle slighting. Firstly, there are dramatic statements of authority such as Bedford and Framlingham, where the appearance of a site was completely transformed on the orders of the monarch. Secondly, the ditches themselves often preserve a snapshot of events.

Those in the first group may be the clearest examples of castle slighting. However, the evidence indicates these may be outliers rather than being typical of slighting. In both situations, the owners of the castles in question defied their king, who aggressively sought to reassert his authority. At Bedford this was

manifest in other actions such as the excommunication and execution of the garrison, which included Faulkes de Bréauté's brother. By comparison, Bigod was treated more leniently and only his castles were damaged not his supporters. This may be explained by the fact Bréauté escaped into exile (Brown 2004, 140–143), and the political situation early in the reign of the young Henry III. His justiciar, Hubert de Burgh, remarked that 'if Faulkes had escaped unpunished, and the castle had not been taken, the kingdom would have been more disturbed than it was' (quoted in Carpenter 1990, 363). In such cases slighting was unambiguously a form of punishment. Based on the substantial earthwork remains of the castles of Thetford, Groby, Huntingdon, and Weston Turville, historian Norman Pounds (1990, 32) declared that 'great earthworks were ineradicable'. Here the cherry-picking of sites has built an incorrect picture, which further bolters the perception of the castle as simply a fortification. The research that forms this thesis has shown that the resources were available if it was decided to completely level a site. The logical conclusion is therefore that the people carrying out the slighting may have felt that it was unnecessary to level the earthworks rather than impossible. This may have heightened the visual impact of slighting. The intention was not to completely remove the castle from the landscape, but to remove the parts which made it a castle, and leave the remains as a reminder of the events which led to the owner's fall from grace.

It is important to note that when ditch fills contained demolition layers, they contained rubble rather than ashlar. This indicates that stone which was fit for reuse was removed in advance of the final tumble into the ditch. This relates back to Brandon Castle, where the ashlar of the great tower was robbed out where it was undamaged by fire. The implication is that if ashlar was found in a ditch fill, it may be necessary to seek some other explanation. For instance, if a building was undermined during an assault, ashlar might fall into the ditch and not be recovered as it was covered in rubble. Arguably it could even indicate natural collapse.

Whereas events at Bedford and Framlingham represent extreme actions, the evidence of Groby and Channelsbrook suggests the earthworks were on occasion deliberately damaged, rather than just the structures they supported. The fortunate thing about this approach is it need not require excavation, as demonstrated by Braun at Channelsbrook. This opens the possibility that

reviewing earthwork surveys may indicate more cases of castle slighting. It should be done with caution however. At Tote Copse (Sussex) there is a depression in the summit of the mound that bears comparison to Groby. Instead the answer lies beneath the surface. A stone great tower survives to some extent, and the depression is a robbed-out corner (Brewster & Brewster 1969, 145). This may particularly have been exacerbated if it then collapsed into the ditch. The hachure plan of the site shows what could almost be terracing around the motte, but is the tell-tale sign of rotational slip; the excavators remarked on how unstable the clay soil became when wet. Overall deliberately levelling a motte was uncommon, and it was more usual for the associated structures to be slighted. There are several reasons for this. First, the buildings had materials which could be reused elsewhere – though the use of fire at six out of 16 mottes examined in this section shows this was not always an overriding concern as fire reduced the amount of reusable building material. Secondly, those carrying out the slighting clearly felt it was more important to destroy the building on top of the earthwork – the mound was a platform, while the super structure held military and social value. Once the tower had been destroyed, levelling the motte would have presented diminishing returns.



## Chapter 5 – The treatment of perimeters and gatehouses

### 5.1 Introduction

**T**he most common constituent parts of castles are the perimeters: timber palisades, curtain walls, ramparts, ditches, and moats. These perimeters are sometimes nested inside each other and provided control over access within the castle. The understanding of castles in modern studies tends to define these buildings as private buildings, combining military, social, and political structures. Abigail Wheatley (2004: ch 2) has demonstrated the medieval understanding of castles was strongly related to their physical attributes. A 12<sup>th</sup>-century homily by Anselm of Canterbury declares that ‘Any tower with a wall around it is called a castle’ (translated by Wheatley 2004, 28–29) while a sermon by Aelred of Rievaulx, also in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, noted ‘In a castle there are three things which are strong, the ditch, the wall, and the keep’ (translated by Wheatley 2004, 30). Both used the same passage of the gospel of St Luke for moral lessons, using the ‘castle’ as an analogy but it demonstrates a common understanding of the castle and its key features. The tower or keep was prominent to the general populace due to its visual importance; the ditches and walls were the outward face of the castle and shaped how medieval society perceived these structures. While Aelred and Anselm were religious men, they also show that the symbolic and military strength of the structure lay in its most salient features. To the medieval mind a castle’s most prominent elements were defining characteristics.

### 5.2 Perimeters

The elite role of fortification in the Middle Ages is emphasised by the emergence of licenses to crenellate, the first of which survive from c. 1200 (Coulson 1979; Coulson 2016, 223–224). While the reigning monarch usually issued them, rather than representing a royal policy on castle building they were often treated as status symbols or marks of royal favour. For instance, the text of a licence for Cooling Castle (Kent) was inscribed on a copper plaque and fixed to the exterior of the gatehouse (Johnson 2002: xiii–xv). Though licences to crenellate were not required to build a castle and are frequently so vague

they do not detail what work they related to, they commonly referred to walls, such as in the example below from 1380, relating to Hemyock Castle (Devon):

Know ye, that, of our special favour, we have for ourselves and our heirs, granted and given special licence to our trusty and well-beloved William Asthorpe, soldier, and Margaret his wife that they may be permitted to fortify and crenellate their Manor House of Hemyock with a wall of stone and flint.

*Calendar of the Patent Rolls Richard II. 1377–1381*  
trans. Lyte 1895, 552

This further emphasises the precise details were not important. The significance of the licence was that it gave the holder evidence they were part of the country's social elite. Indeed, castles are elite architecture as much a military architecture, as seen in the previous chapter. A castle's defences combined military purpose with social symbolism. This would mark them as particularly important areas to slight because such an act would diminish the military, social, and political roles of the castle. An understanding of how these areas were treated is therefore integral to an appreciation of castle slighting. There is an abundance of examples of castle defences being slighted. The list below was compiled for the following discussion.

Table 5.1. Castles with slighted perimeters.

Name	County	OS grid reference	Date slighted	Method of destruction	Reference
Bedford	Bedfordshire	TL053497	1224	Picking	Baker <i>et al.</i> 1979a
Botelers Castle	Warwickshire	SP084559	12 <sup>th</sup> or 13 <sup>th</sup> century	Picking; burning	Jones <i>et al.</i> 1997
Brockhurst	Shropshire	SO447926	Mid-13 <sup>th</sup> century	Burning	Barker 1961–64a
Buckton	Cheshire	SD983016	Late 12 <sup>th</sup> century	Burning; digging	Grimsditch, Nevell & Nevell 2012
Buittle	Dumfries and Galloway	NX819616	Early 14 <sup>th</sup> century	Picking	Penman & Cochrane 1997
Castle Cary	Somerset	ST641321	During or shortly after 'the Anarchy'	Picking; burning	Somerset County Council 2015
Coull	Aberdeenshire	NJ513022	14 <sup>th</sup> century	Picking; burning	Simpson 1924
Crowmarsh Gifford	Oxfordshire	SU6131894 0	After 1140s	Picking; burning	Laban 2013

Danes Castle	Devon	SX920933	During or shortly after 'the Anarchy'	Digging	Higham & Henderson 2011
Degannwy	Caernarfonshire	SH782795	1263	Picking; undermining	Alcock 1968
Desborough	Buckinghamshire	SU847933	During or shortly after 'the Anarchy'	Digging	Collard 1988
Dyserth	Flintshire	SJ060799	1263	Picking, burning, undermining	Cox 1895
Great Torrington	Devon	SS497190	1228	Digging; picking	Whiteaway 2005
Harbottle	Northumberland	NT933048	Early 14 <sup>th</sup> century	Picking	Crow 2004
Leicester	Leicestershire	SK583041	1170s	Picking	Fox 1944–45
Lochmaben	Dumfries and Galloway	NY088812	14 <sup>th</sup> century	Burning; digging	Macdonald & Laing 1977
Middleton Stoney	Oxfordshire	SP532233	13 <sup>th</sup> century	Picking	Rowley 1972
Nevern	Pembrokeshire	SN082402	1195	Undermining; burning	Caple 2010b
Radcot	Oxfordshire	SU285996	12 <sup>th</sup> century	Picking	Wessex Archaeology 2009
Roxburgh	Roxburghshire	NT713377	1460	Picking	Wessex Archaeology 2004
Saffron Walden	Essex	TL539387	1157–67	Picking; digging	Bassett 1982
Therfield	Hertfordshire	TL331371	Mid-12 <sup>th</sup> century	Digging	Biddle 1964
Trowbridge	Wiltshire	ST856579	Late 12 <sup>th</sup> or early 13 <sup>th</sup> century	Digging	Davies & Graham 1990

As will be seen in the following pages, the evidence for destruction usually takes the form of a rubble fill, while a large discrete deposit of clay or a spread of burnt material may be particularly indicative of slighting at an earthwork and timber castle. While mining is a comparatively uncommon form of slighting, it is particularly indicative of slighting, and will therefore be discussed first.

As was discussed above, the great tower at **Degannwy Castle** was undermined in 1263. Though there are several destruction episodes in the site's history, the archaeological evidence would seem to belong to a single event.

Parts of the 3.3m thick curtain wall enclosing the south of the bailey was also undermined (Fig. 5.1). Leslie Alcock was so struck by the scale of the destruction discovered at Degannwy; around 450m of walling was undermined and demolished in an act he described it as ‘a striking testimony to the authority, power and malice of Llywelyn ap Gruffydd’ (1963, 192).

Llywelyn ap Gruffydd was also responsible for slighting **Dyserth Castle** (Flintshire) in 1263. An entry in the *Annales Cestrienses* reads ‘Llewelin ... by the command of the Barons besieged the Castle of Disserth during five weeks, and having captured it the day before the Feast of S. Oswald, King and Martyr [August 4], they razed it to the ground’ (quoted in Taylor 1895, 381). It is important that the source draws a distinction between the siege and the slighting caused by Llywelyn after Dyserth was captured as this shows a contemporary appreciation of the role of slighting and that it was distinct from siegecraft in both purpose and meaning. Parts of the masonry structure

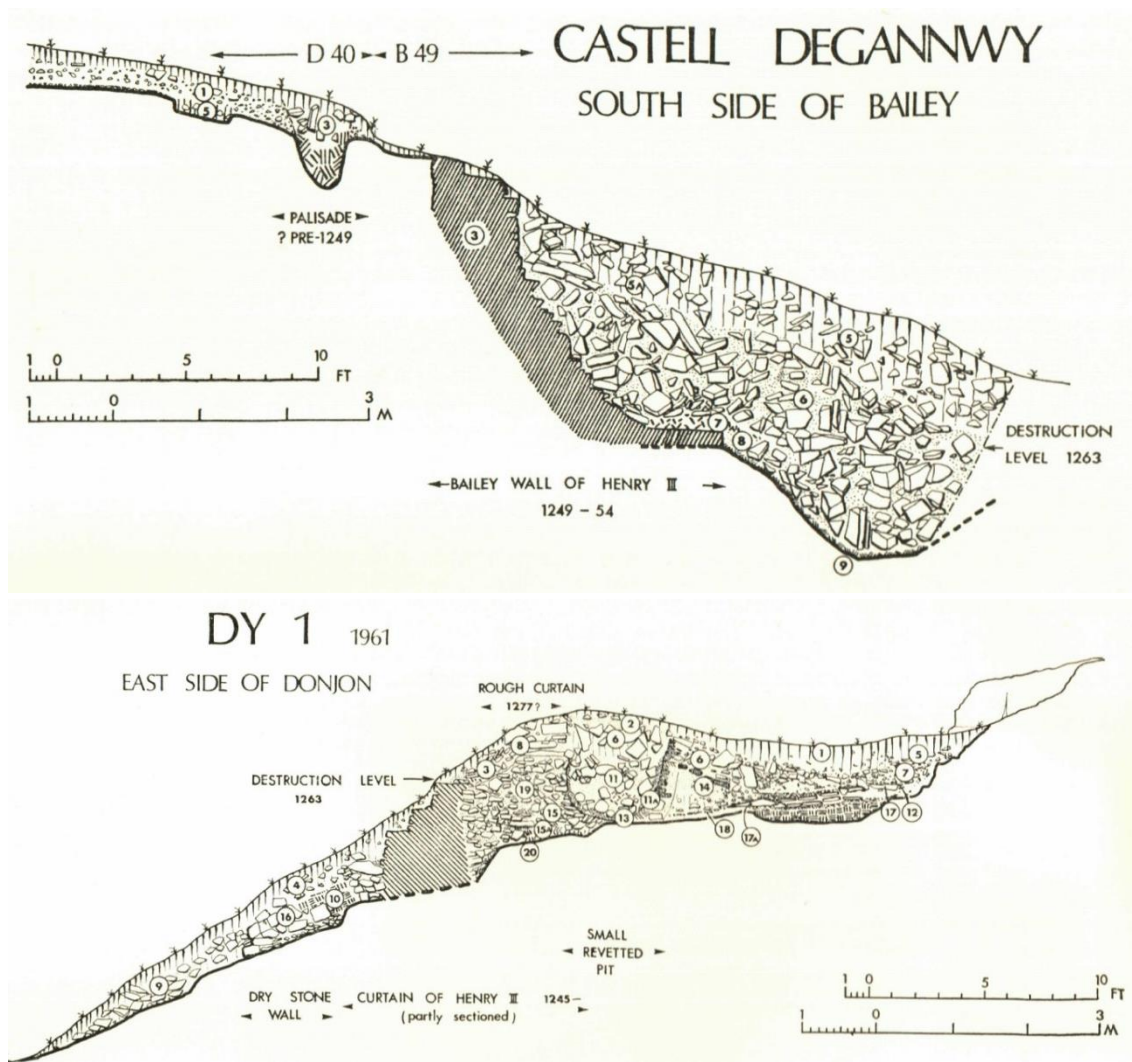


Fig. 5.1. Section of the trench across the east side of Degannwy’s inner ward (top), referred to as the donjon, and the south side of the bailey (bottom). From Alcock 1968, 195–196.

remained standing into the 20<sup>th</sup> century but were quarried away so only the earthworks of the outer enclosure remain (Wiles 2007). While the site was being quarried in the 1910s, a round feature immediately south of the castle was excavated and found to be a mine shaft that had been used to undermine part of the curtain wall (Cox 1895; Glenn 1915, 52). As discussed in Chapter 3.3.1, the proximity of the start of the mine indicates it was created to slight the castle, rather than during a siege. Mining was a method used when destruction of the standing building was the key objective, and makes reuse of materials very unlikely.

Excavations in 1992 and 1993 at **Danes Castle** (Devon) spanned the ditch and the interior of the ringwork (Fig. 5.2). The investigation demonstrated the castle was in use for a short period as there was very little silt in the base of the ditch before it was deliberately filled in (Higham & Henderson 2011, 134). The castle overlay a medieval cultivation layer, dated to the 11<sup>th</sup> or 12<sup>th</sup> century by pottery sherds. The *Gesta Stephani* detailed the siege of Exeter in 1136 during ‘the Anarchy’; though it does not mention a siege castle, this is the most likely context for the construction of the work (Higham & Henderson 2011, 128–129, 134–135). The ditch had a regular plan (Fig. 5.2), even after it was filled, indicating a considerable amount of rampart material was deposited in the ditch all the way round. Such an act so soon after construction can only be a deliberate act of slighting.

Based on pottery evidence discovered during rescue excavations, **Boteler’s Castle** (Warwickshire) was in use during the 12<sup>th</sup> or 13<sup>th</sup> century (Jones *et al.* 1997, 51). In 1992 fourteen trial trenches (Fig. 5.2a) were opened in and around the outer bailey before a road was constructed cutting through the enclosure. Though the trenches outside the castle enclosure produced little of archaeological significance, and those in the interior did not uncover evidence of demolition, the trenches crossing the ditch showed it had been deliberately filled (Jones *et al.* 1997, 3). The primary ditch fill (10/7) (Fig. 5.2b) was a silty clay layer, with a layer of clay on top (10/5) about half filling the ditch. The ditch was recut, and no additional silting happened before additional layers of clay (10/4, 10/3, and 10/2) were deposited reducing the depth of the ditch from 2.8m to 1.45m (Jones *et al.* 1997, 18). The lack of silt indicates the deposit of clay happened a short time after the re-cut, making it unlikely that the site

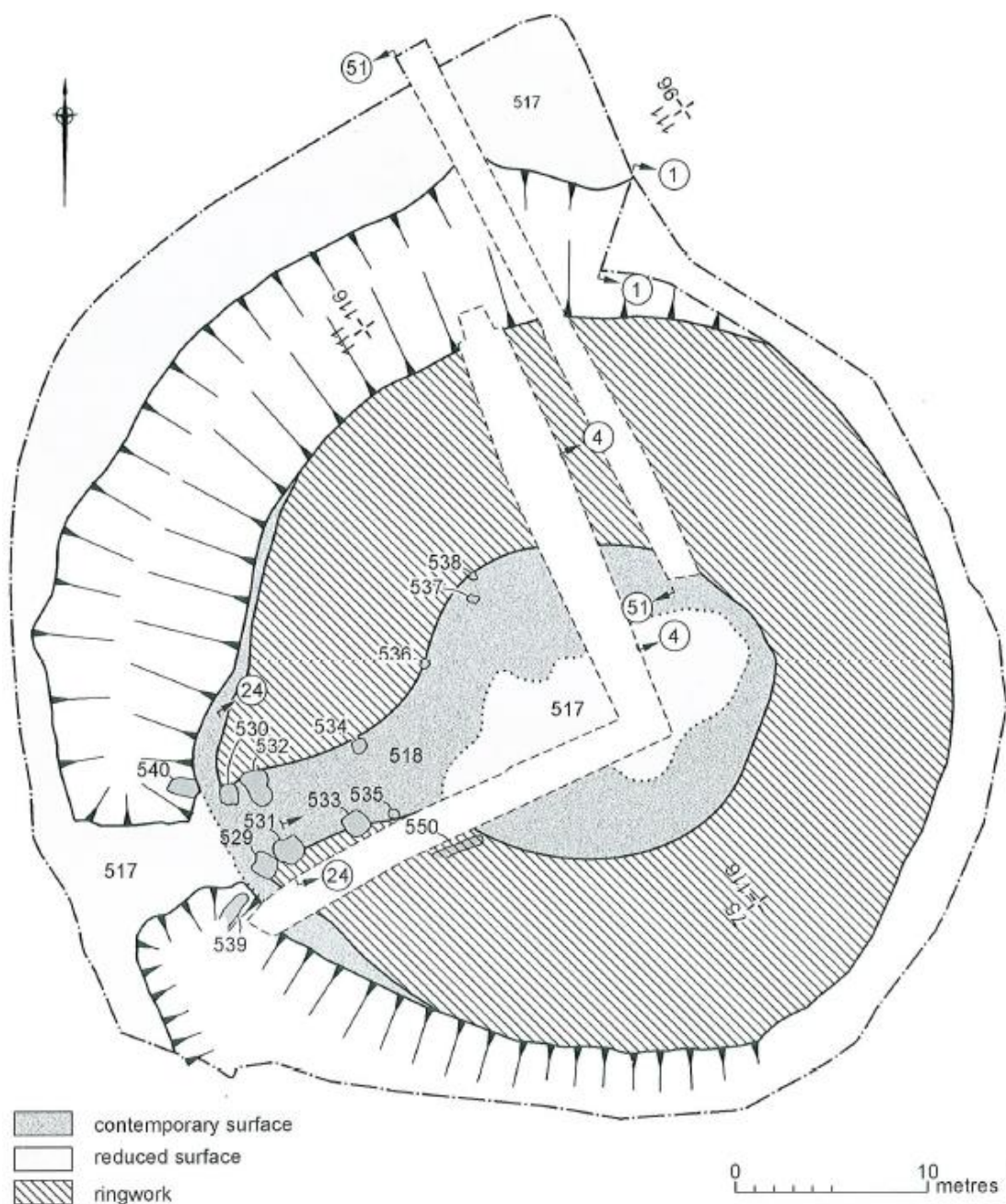


Fig. 5.2. The 1993 excavations at Danes Castle in Devon. From Higham & Henderson 2011, 131.

was simply abandoned to decay. Furthermore, it is doubtful the owner would have renovated the defences only to then voluntarily demolish them, indicating there was hostile action involved. Clay is a highly stable soil (Rimington 2004, 5) so it is unlikely the infill would have been the result of erosion or slumping. Therefore, the most plausible explanation is that the filling was deliberate and an act of slighting. While Jones' report suggested fills 10/4 to 10/2 were the result of the demolition of the rampart, there was no comment on the source of 10/5. With identical soil conditions, this is evidence of a second undocumented episode of slighting at Boteler's Castle. The site was first mentioned during 'the



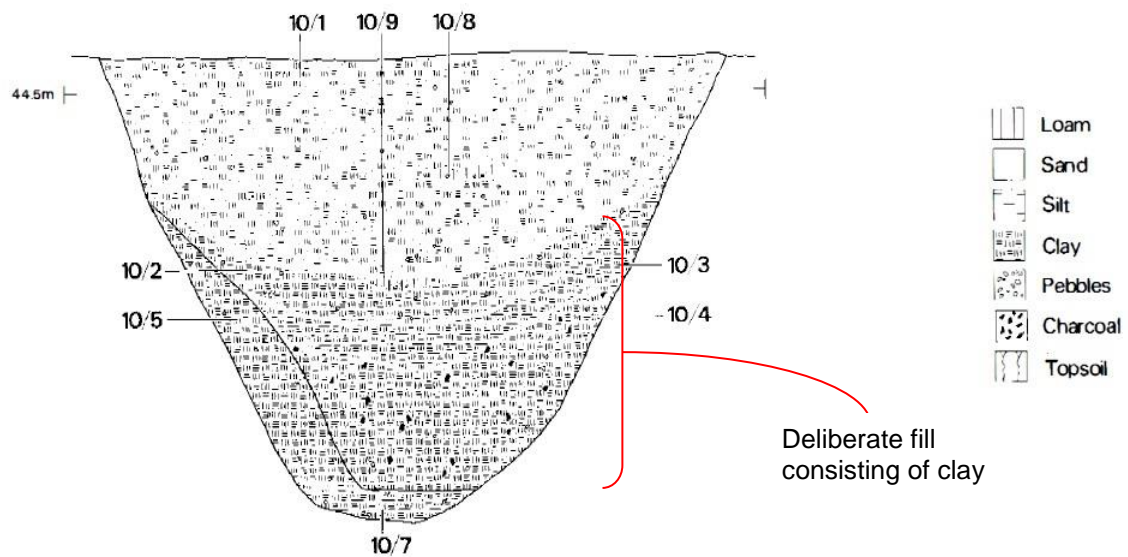
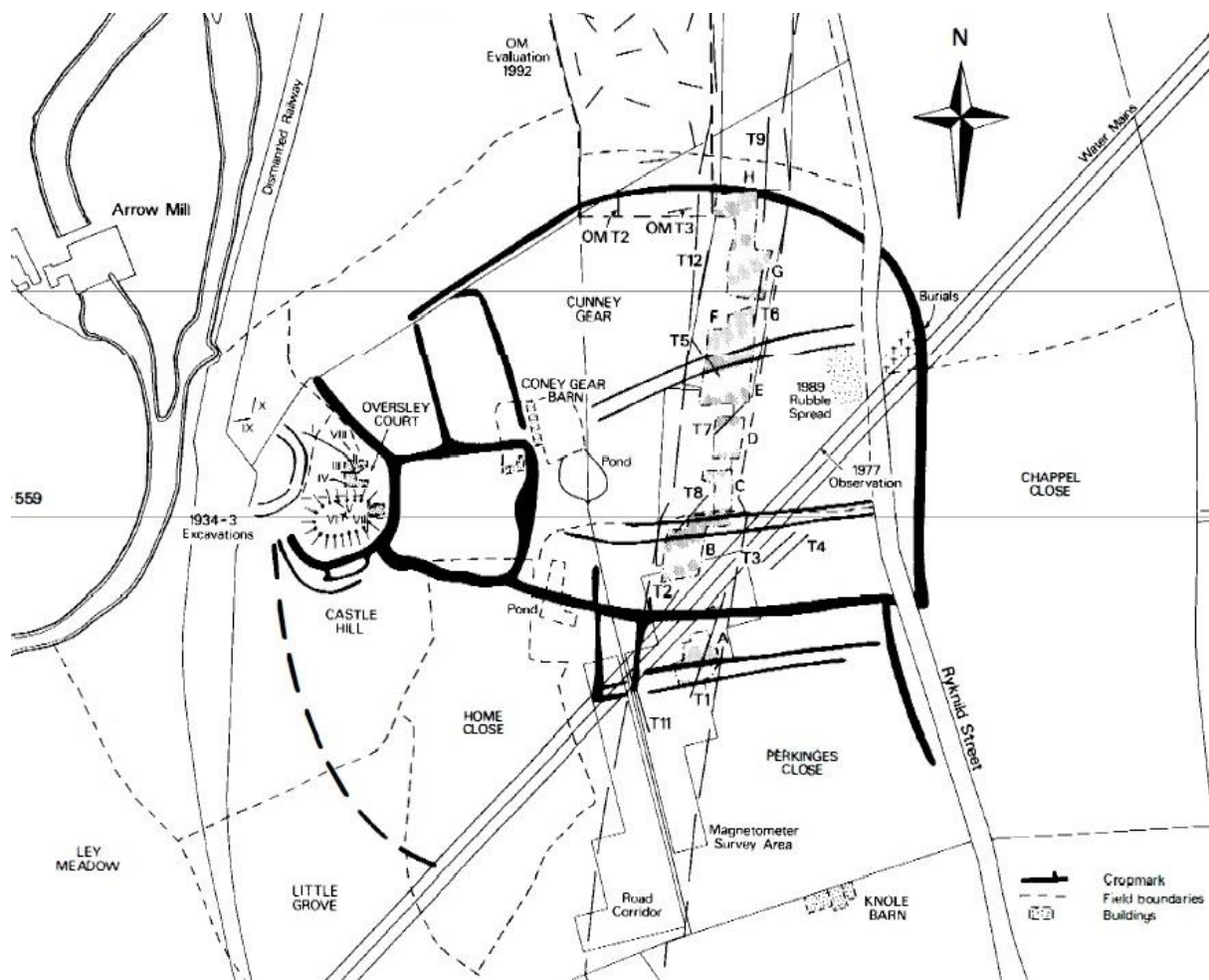


Fig. 5.3a (top). The location of 14 trial trenches at Boteler's Castle. From Jones et al. 1997, 7.  
 Fig. 5.3b (bottom). Section from Trench 1 showing the recut above primary silting. After the recut three clay layers were deposited when the castle was slighted. From Jones et al. 1997, 17.

Anarchy' but the imprecise dating of the site through pottery prevents close association of the destruction with a particular conflict as the revolt of 1173–74 provides just as likely a context for slighting as the civil war between Stephen and Matilda. It is even possible that the castle may have been slighted after each of these conflicts.

**Trowbridge Castle** (Wiltshire) is first mentioned in 1139 when it was besieged. Excavations during the 1980s in the northern half of the inner bailey and the north-western segment of the outer bailey (Fig. 5.4) discovered a layer of clay spread over the site. This material is thought to have derived from a section of the rampart enclosing the inner bailey. Dating evidence for this event was not recovered, however the excavators suggested a tentative date of the late 12<sup>th</sup> or early 13<sup>th</sup> century. It was spread over a large area – more than 17m

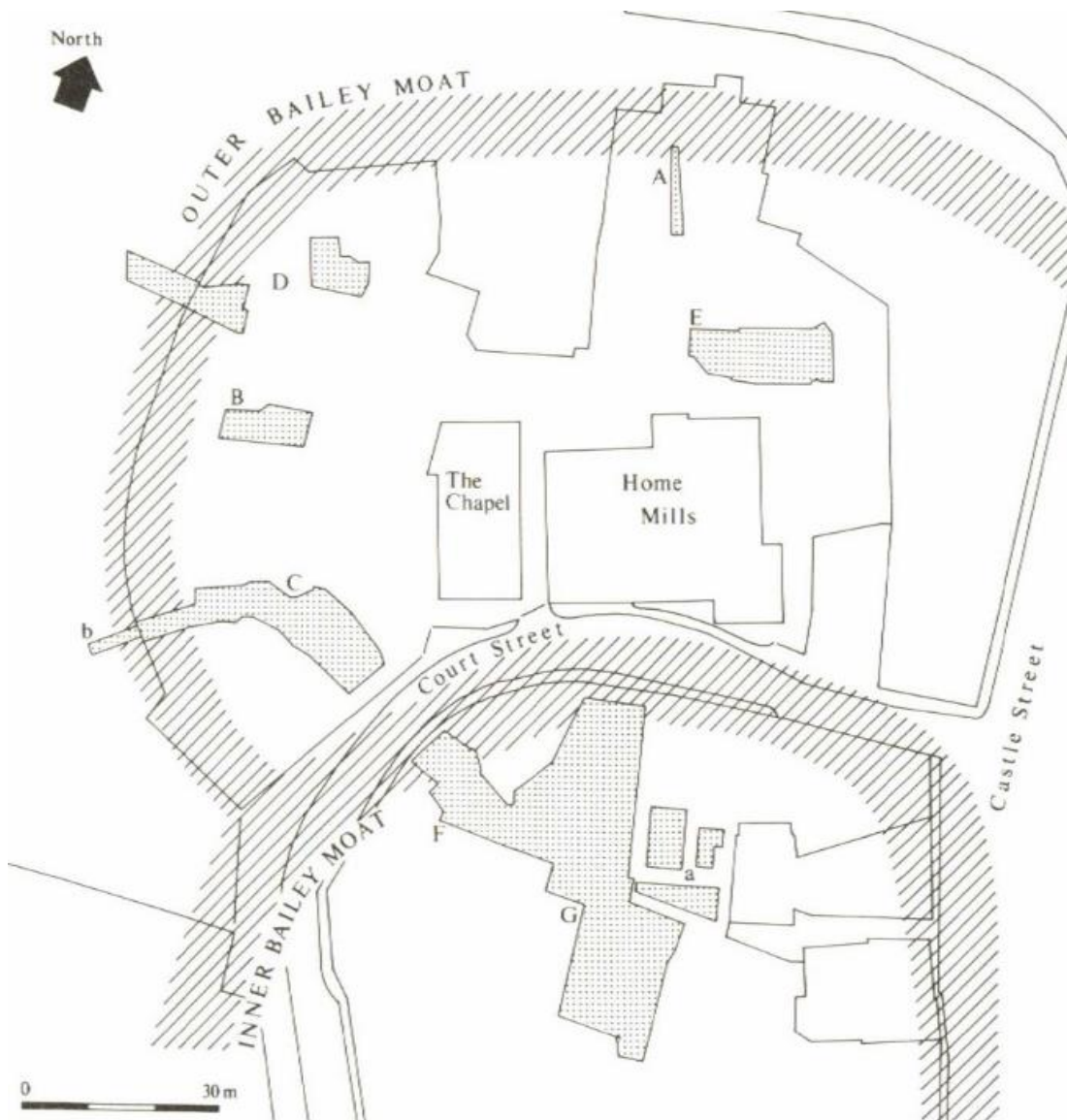


Fig. 5.4. Plan of the excavations at Trowbridge Castle in 1988. From Davies & Graham 1990, 51.



from the rampart itself – meaning damage caused by the 1139 siege can be ruled out as it is too extensive (Davies & Graham 1990, 54–56). It would have been an impractical undertaking during the siege, but afterwards may have been more realistic. This is one of the key differences between slighting and damage caused by a siege. As the castle was besieged during ‘the Anarchy’, the excavators did well to look beyond this conflict for a date range as was the case with Weston Turville Castle.

**Desborough Castle** (Buckinghamshire) is a ringwork and bailey. Trial excavations in 1987 discovered the bailey and were concentrated on the outer defences. Pottery discovered indicated the bailey ditch was excavated in the early to mid-12<sup>th</sup> century (Collard 1988, 15, 39). A spread of flint nodules marks the transition between silting layers and dump layers and the excavator, Mark Collard, felt the various chalk and flint deposits were the remains of a bank that formed part of the defence. He went one step further suggesting the ditch was filled so the area could be used agriculturally but did not explain how he arrived at this conclusion (Collard 1988, 23–24, 40). This theory is not unreasonable and the absence of evidence of burning, for instance, does not suggest the site met a violent end. However, Collard made a pertinent point that was not further expanded upon. During ‘the Anarchy’, with which the castle is presumed to be associated, the manor of West Wycombe, of which Desborough was a part, was owned by Henry de Blois, Bishop of Winchester. Though it was suggested that Desborough was a siege castle, this seems unlikely to have been the primary purpose as the site is unusually complex for the area. The discovery of 620 sherds of medieval pottery as well as 167 fragments of animal bone suggests the site was active for longer than might be expected for primarily a siege castle (Collard 1988, 26, 30). Significantly, the king punished Henry de Blois by having his castles demolished. It is therefore likely that this castle in a manor owned by the bishop would be treated in the same fashion as the others. This is a more satisfactory explanation than an interest in agriculture.

Pleshey Castle, mentioned earlier, and **Saffron Walden** were held by the same man, Geoffrey II de Mandeville, during ‘the Anarchy’. Between 1972 and 1980 several sites within the town of Saffron Walden were excavated. This included 4 trenches at the remains of the motte-and-bailey castle in the north-east corner of the town. These trenches were closely grouped in and around the great tower (Fig. 5.5) (Bassett 1982, 51). An earthwork south-west of the great

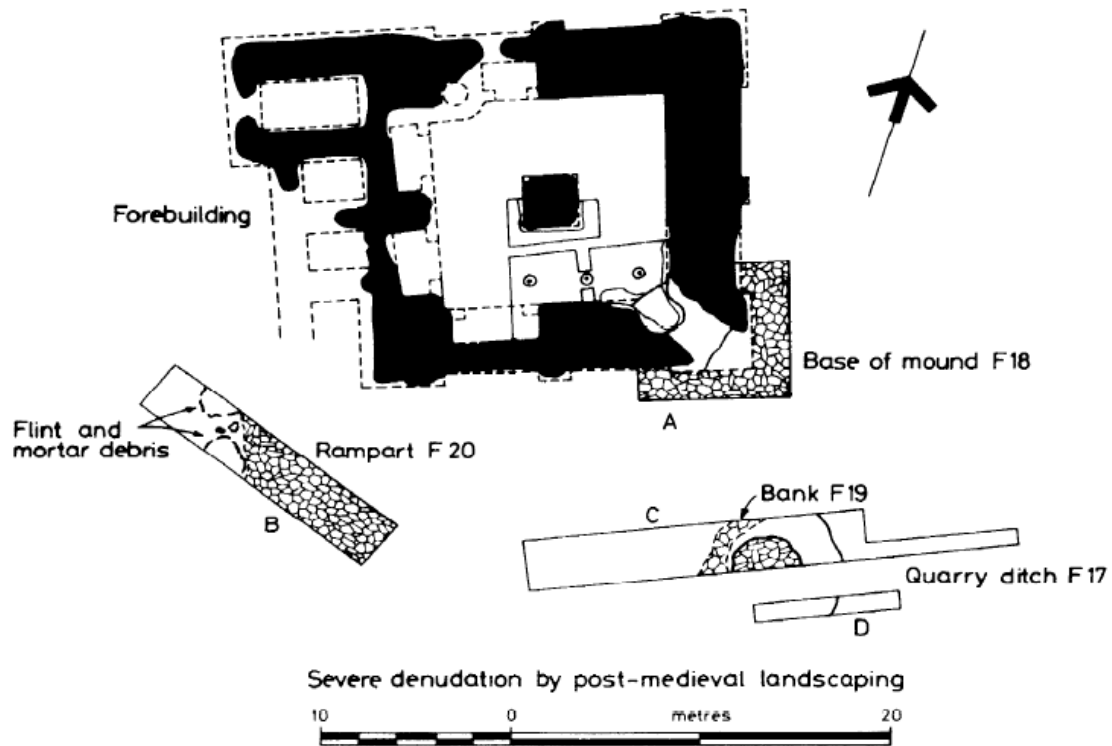


Fig. 5.5. The excavations at Saffron Walden Castle were focussed on the area surrounding the great tower, and excluding the outer bailey. From Bassett 1982, 51.

tower was excavated (trench B) and it was discovered to be the remains of a chalk rubble rampart (Bassett 1982, 59). The reduction from its original form is represented by cut F33 (Fig. 5.6), which disrupts the original line of the rampart. Masonry remains were deposited at the foot of the bank before being sealed by a thick layer of chalk which had originally been part of the rampart. On top of the masonry was a layer of loamy clay mixed with lenses of chalk, indicating the turf on top of the rampart had been stripped and thrown into the ditch, before the rest of the bank was then slighted (Bassett 1982, 60–61). This completely rules out natural agency and means the destruction was deliberate. Before this was discovered, the excavator had suggested the irregularities in the ditch might indicate that it was never finished or collapsed back in on itself (Webster & Cherry 1973, 161); this demonstrates how important excavation is in giving insight into activity on a site. The evidence suggests the earthworks were created a relatively short time before their reduction. Small amounts of weathered material had begun to collect at the bottom of the ditch, but no turf line had yet formed (Bassett 1982, 59–60). It is unlikely the owner of the castle would have created a rampart and ditch only to shortly fill it in afterwards. This was not a siegework such as Danes Castle and Crowmarsh Gifford which may have been reduced after the conclusion of the conflict. As can be seen from the

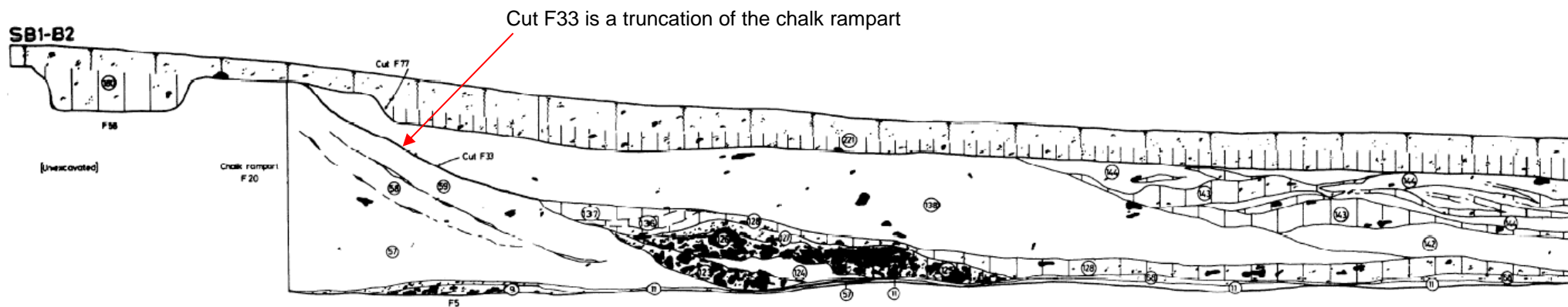


Fig. 5.6. Section of trench B at Saffron Walden Castle, showing the truncated rampart. Cut F33 represents the slighting. From Bassett 1982: between pages 60 and 61.

presence of the great tower, it was meant to be a permanent site. The castle at Saffron Walden was first mentioned in 1141, though it is uncertain when it was built (Bassett 1982, 15). The excavations did not provide conclusive evidence for when the slighting took place, but a date range of 1157 to 1167 was suggested by the excavator in 'an attempt to correlate the results of excavation with those of documentary research by others, and so is unsupported by independently datable artefacts from the relevant archaeological deposits' (Bassett 1982, 52). The Pipe Rolls for 1157–58 record that £9 12s 4d was spent on 'throwing down the castles of Earl Geoffrey' (Bassett 1982, 16). The simplest conclusion is the slighting discovered archaeologically was that referred to in the Pipe Rolls.

Plans to bulldoze the motte-and-bailey castle of **Therfield** (Hertfordshire) led to excavations in 1958 to record the site's archaeology. Though the plans were curtailed, in 1960 the ramparts of the outer bailey were levelled (Historic England 2015). Trenches were opened across the ditches, gatehouse, motte, outer earthworks, and the northern part of the interior (Fig. 5.7). Little was known about the site previously, and apart from a small and poorly documented excavation on the motte in the late 1920s no other archaeological work had been undertaken at the site (Biddle 1964, 54–56). Two separate sections across the outer ditches revealed that the clay rampart had been deposited into the ditch (Fig. 5.8). The absence of silting layers indicated this happened soon after the work started, possibly before the castle was even finished. A series of postholes marked a timber revetment for the bank, however, these were filled with clay from the bank, indicating the timbers had been removed and the rampart had collapsed, sealing the postholes (Biddle 1964, 57–60). Rather than decay, this represents a deliberate act of slighting. Though damaged by amateur excavations, the motte did not appear to have been truncated; the ditch however provided 19 sherds of mid-12<sup>th</sup> century pottery, helping to date the period of activity on the site (Biddle 1964, 64–65). This combined with the lack of silting in the ditches led the excavator to conclude that the castle was built during 'the Anarchy' and slighted either soon after it was finished or possibly before the work was complete (Biddle 1964, 66). While the pottery evidence suggests this is likely, it is not so diagnostic as to exclude other interpretations. It is possible, for instance, that the castle dates from the Revolt of 1173–74 or was the focus of a local dispute and was slighted soon after. The

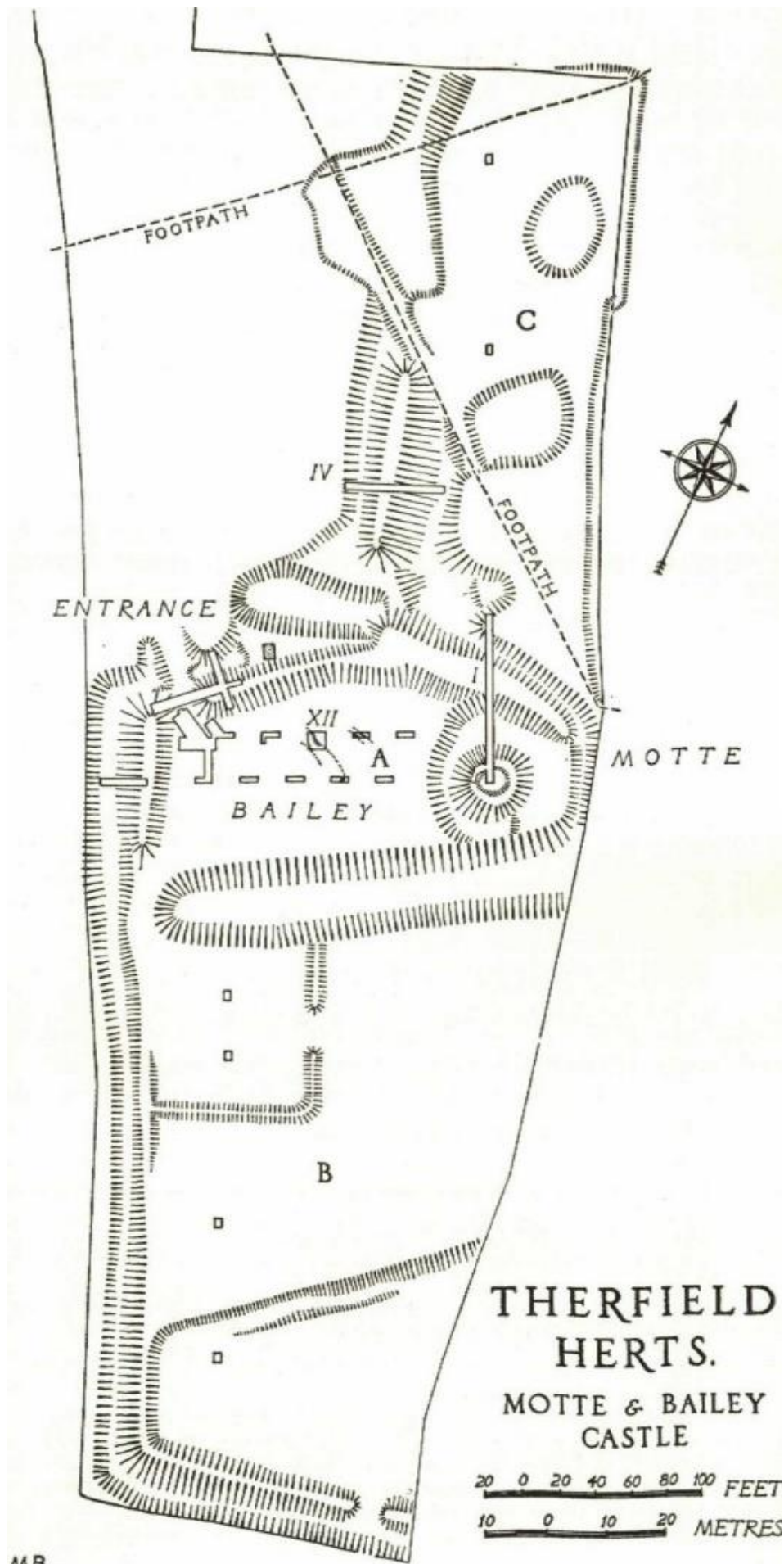


Fig. 5.7. The location of trenches at Therfield Castle in 1958. From Biddle 1964, 56.

M.B.

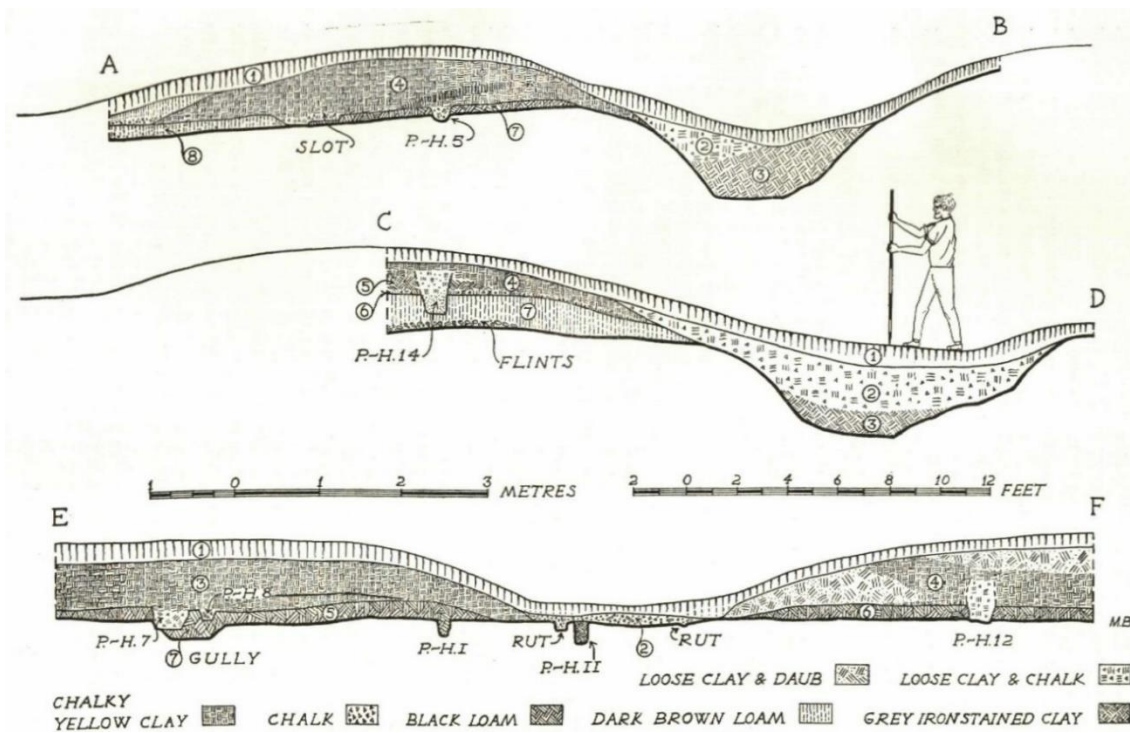


Fig. 5.8. Sections across the perimeter ditch at Therfield Castle (A–B and C–D) and across the entrance (E–F). From Biddle 1964, 59.

manor was held by Ramsey Abbey, with some parts alienated to Robert of Therfield in the mid-12<sup>th</sup> century, so the ownership of the manor does not indicate preference for one context over another (Page 1912c, 276–284). As such while ‘the Anarchy’ provides a likely context for the slighting, the temptation to align the archaeological record with the most famous conflict of the 12<sup>th</sup> century should not exclude other possibilities.

So far, the sites considered have typically presented evidence for a single destruction event. Even at Degannwy, where documentary sources indicate there were at least two separate destruction events, only one could be securely identified archaeologically. Along with Boteler’s Castle and South Mimms,

**Middleton Stoney** (Oxfordshire) runs against this trend. Partial excavations encompassing the interior and the bailey ditch discovered two layers indicating deliberate filling of the ditch. A layer of limestone rubble was sealed by a deposit of brown loam (Rowley 1972, 121). Documentary sources offer little information: it was first mentioned in 1215 and a year later the king gave orders for the castle’s destruction (Lobel 1959, 243). Pottery evidence was only able to provide a broad date, indicating the site was no longer used as a fortification by the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century (Rowley 1972, 122–123). This would fall broadly within the framework of the royal order to destroy the castle. The turf lines indicate sustained periods between destruction layers most likely triggered

by robbing activity on the site (Rowley 1972, 124). The conclusion is that the slighting itself was a single event, probably dating around 1215 when King John issued the order to destroy Middleton Stoney Castle.

The siege castles of **Crowmarsh Gifford** (Oxfordshire) and Danes Castle (Devon) have a number of features in common, including their general form – both are ringworks – their distance from the castle they were built to besiege – between 200m and 300m – and the fact their ditches were either unsilted (or had very little silt), indicating a short life-span before being deliberately filled in. Several siege castles including Crowmarsh Gifford were built near Wallingford during the war as part of three sieges (Fradley, Wright & Creighton 2016, 50). A total of 17 evaluation trenches were opened at nearby Crowmarsh Gifford in 2011, examining the ringwork. Three of these trenches were expanded to create a larger area of excavation. In a site measuring roughly 75m by 60m (Fig. 5.9), both ditch and interior were examined (Laban 2013, 189–194). The conclusion of the excavator was that the earthwork represented one of the siege castles mention in the *Gesta*. As is typical with ringworks, the centre was raised by depositing material excavated from the ditches; however, when the castle went out of use, it was returned to the ditch, partially filling it. The silt in the ditch was just 0.10m deep at its greatest. On top of this layer in trench 17 was a deposit of ‘chalk blocks and charcoal’, indicating part of a structure; this was sealed by layers of alluvial deposits. Pottery dating from 1140–1175 was discovered in the fill, indicating the destruction event happened after 1140 (Laban 2013, 194–195). In short, Laban’s (2013, 189) suggestion that Crowmarsh Gifford was slighted after the Treaty of Wallingford is the most likely situation.

The archaeological evidence shows that a ringwork was created after 1125 and destroyed after 1140; in all the site was probably in use for no more than 25 years (Laban 2013, 191, 194, 196). Though in this case have in this case documentary evidence provides a framework within which we can place the events at Crowmarsh, the archaeological evidence alone would have provided a suitable context, strongly indicating it was active during ‘the Anarchy’. The fact that the ditches were filled shows the site was not simply abandoned; while some charcoal was recovered, it was on such a scale that indicates the refuse of occupation rather than a destructive burning event. The likelihood is the timbers were reused elsewhere. A considerable amount of



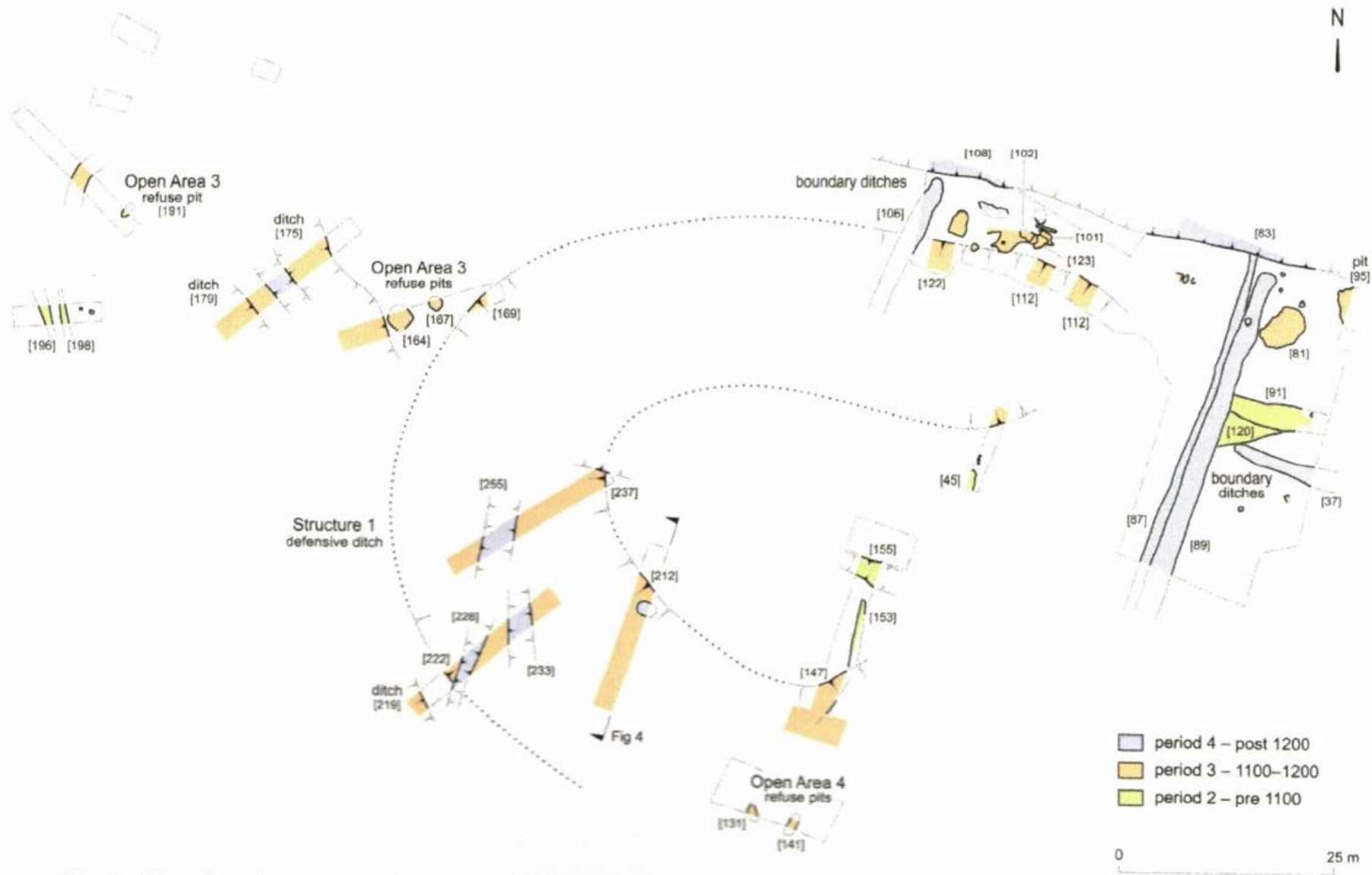


Fig. 5.9. The excavations at Crowmarsh Gifford Castle in 2011. From Laban 2013, 193.



effort was expended in filling in the ditch, which would not have been necessary had the site simply been abandoned. Instead it would seem the parties involved decided it would be best to completely demolish it. The strong military nature of the siegework means that martial expediency may have been the key consideration in slighting the castle, however it should be considered that after 'the Anarchy' several castles were destroyed. This was part of restoring the country to its state before the war, reasserting royal authority rather than exclusively being a military concern. It should also be noted that while siegeworks had a more overtly military character than more permanent castles, around a quarter of the pottery recovered during excavations consisted of jugs and pitchers which is similar to the proportion found at high-status manorial sites (Creighton & Wright 2016, 58).

At **Castle Cary** (Somerset) there is evidence of a violent end to the castle's occupation. Excavations in 1890 explored the site of the great tower and some of the surrounding earthworks; this work represents the most recent published excavation, however excavations in 1999 uncovered part of the ditch system and found that it had been deliberately filled in (Somerset County Council 2015). A ditch north of the great tower was excavated in 1890 and it was discovered that the primary deposit was not some form of silting, but a 2.4m-thick layer of stones. The stones were of two types: local Cary Hill stone used as rubble fill for stone walls, and Douling stone which was used as a facing material. Mortar was found on some of the stones, indicating they had been part of a building rather than the remnants of a limekiln, as discovered elsewhere on the site. Some of these stones appeared to have been exposed to fire (Gregory 1890, 170–173). The evidence of fire indicates the collapse was not the result of weathering, and deliberate demolition is the more likely cause. According to the *Gesta Stephani*, in 1138 King Stephen 'besieged Castle Cary with vigour and determination, and since his engine scattered fire and showers of stones among the besieged and the pressure went on until their rations ran short, he at last compelled them to surrender to him' (*Gesta Stephani* trans. Potter 1976, 67–69). The use of fire suggests the archaeological evidence of burning belongs to the attack, rather than after the castle had been captured. However, the fact the garrison surrendered through starvation suggests the siege engines were not particularly effective in battering the walls of the castle. Therefore, if the 2.4m layer of stone in the castle ditch was a direct result of the

assault, it would diminish the likelihood the garrison resisted long enough to starve. It has been suggested the purpose of 12<sup>th</sup>-century siege engines might have been to impact the morale of the defenders than in the hope of creating a breach through which an assault could be mounted (Speight 2000, 269–274). The concurrence of fire and stone tumble indicates this was an act of slighting rather than evidence of a straightforward assault which is the conclusion of this thesis. This is reinforced by the *Gesta Stephani*, which documents that the garrison ended up surrendering.

The fate of **Bedford Castle** has already been discussed, but the demolition did not end with the great tower and the motte on which it stood. The inner bailey ditch provided further evidence, with a rubble fill mixed with timber whilst charcoal was also present. The primary silting beneath the destruction layers contained a penny from 1165–1214 (Baker *et al.* 1979a, 31–32). Even without this evidence, the destruction could reasonably be attributed to the same period as the destruction of the great tower and filling of the motte ditch. The coin provides close dating evidence to the destruction ordered by Henry III.

The issue at hand is whether slighting could be identified from this evidence without corroborating information from elsewhere on the site and documentary evidence? The absence of ashlar in the fill is noticeable, suggesting it was removed for reuse. There were tip lines from both sides of the 11.5m wide ditch, showing that those carrying out the demolition were in complete control of the site. Had the ditch been filled during a siege it would have been from only the side closest to the attackers. In the event of a wall being undermined it may collapse into a ditch, but filling from the other side might be less useful, especially as in this case the rubble appears to have been deposited before the timber. There is also evidence that larger timbers – up to 1.6m long – were burned, indicating something much more substantial (Baker *et al.* 1979a, 32). Importantly, the evidence of burning shows that two methods of destruction were employed which makes accident or attack less likely than slighting.

Partial excavations by Philip Barker at **Brockhurst Castle** (Shropshire) in 1959 discovered that the ditch separating the northern and southern baileys had been filled shortly after being re-cut; this layer consisted of rubble and charcoal, suggesting a violent end (Barker 1961–64a, 72). The use of multiple methods of destruction is especially indicative of slighting. It was a small-scale

investigation, looking in particular at the ditch separating the inner and middle baileys (Fig. 5.10). Pottery dating from 1150–1250 was recovered from the site, although only one sherd of pottery came from the section across the ditch itself (Fig. 5.11) (Barker 1961–64a, 67, 75). The 6ft thick curtain wall around the south bailey has been robbed out, though this fate is shared with many abandoned structures and does not sway the argument either towards slighting or attack (Barker 1961–64a, 67). Instead the key consideration should be the

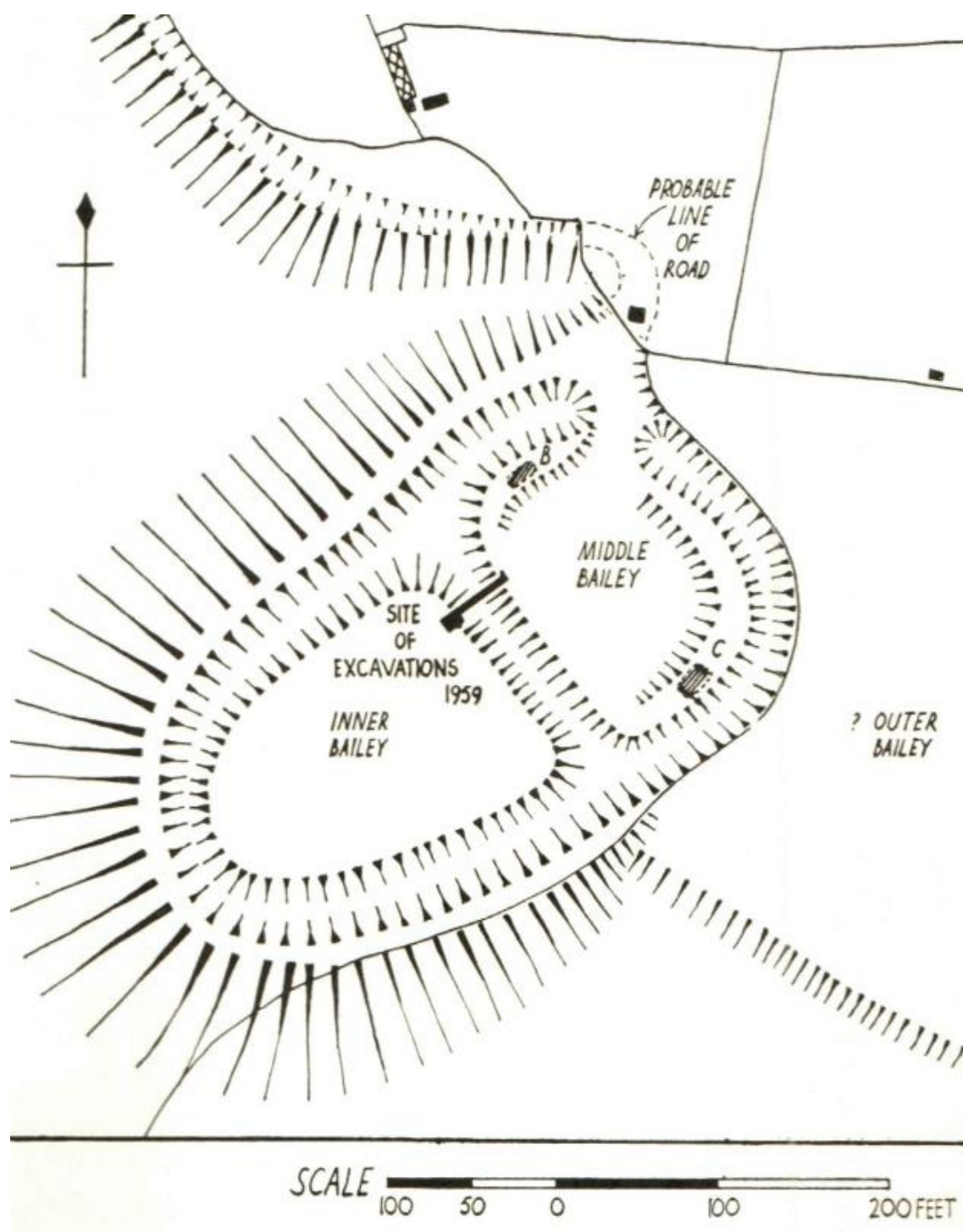


Fig. 5.10. A plan of Brockhurst Castle showing the 1959 excavations. From Barker 1961–64a, 64.

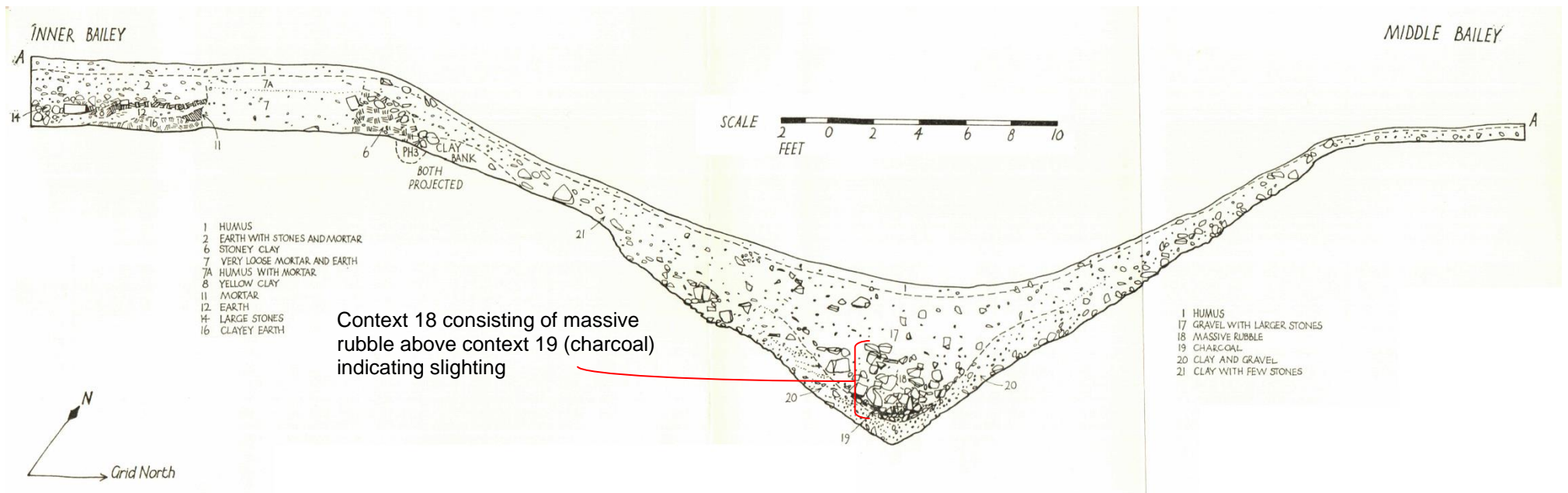


Fig. 5.11. A section through the ditch between the north and south baileys at Brockhurst Castle. From Barker 1961–64a: between pages 66 and 67.

location of the burning. As it was discovered between the two baileys it is unlikely to have been incurred as a direct result of an attack, which was more likely to have been targeted at the outermost defences rather than partitions between wards. The timber structures behind the curtain wall did not show signs of destruction by fire. With Brockhurst historical documents show that in 1215 the ownership of the castle was disputed and in 1255 the Sheriff of Shropshire was ordered to drain the ponds around the castle (Barker 1961–64a, 66). Both events fall within the second half of the date range suggested by the pottery recovered by Barker, and are most likely part of the final stages of Brockhurst's history. Together with the archaeological evidence, it appears this is a case of deliberate destruction rather than an assault with damaging consequences for the structure.

At **Lochmaben Castle** (Dumfriesshire) a similar situation can be found. The enclosure castle was built in stone in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, developed from a timber pele of the late 13<sup>th</sup> century founded by the English. Excavations in the late 1960s and early 1970s examined the rampart and ditch of the outer bailey, and the interior of the inner bailey (Macdonald & Laing 1977, 126–128). Cutting II (Fig. 5.12) across the southern defences of the outer bailey found both evidence of a burnt palisade, and that the ditch fill consisted of a single dump fill. Close to the ditch, but not actually parallel to it, was a spread of burnt clay and charcoal, within which were embedded two pieces of burnt timber. This feature was interpreted as the remains of a burnt palisade; and 14<sup>th</sup>-century pottery suggested the palisade was constructed 'not much later than 1300' (Macdonald & Laing 1997, 142, 144). A stone-lined drain that reused ashlar blocks ran underneath the burning and was used to date the destruction event to the second half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century as these blocks were most likely part of the castle when it was rebuilt in stone (Macdonald & Laing 1977, 144). The profile of the ditch and rampart uncovered during excavation shows the rampart was truncated and the material used to partially fill the associated ditch. While a single burning event in the outer bailey might have been the result of an accident, the manpower required to fill in the castle ditch indicates a prolonged period in which labourers were able to slight the castle defences. Based on the archaeological evidence, this is an example of 14<sup>th</sup>-century slighting in Scotland, however there are documentary sources that might offer some context. With several episodes of capture and recapture during the Anglo-Scottish Wars,

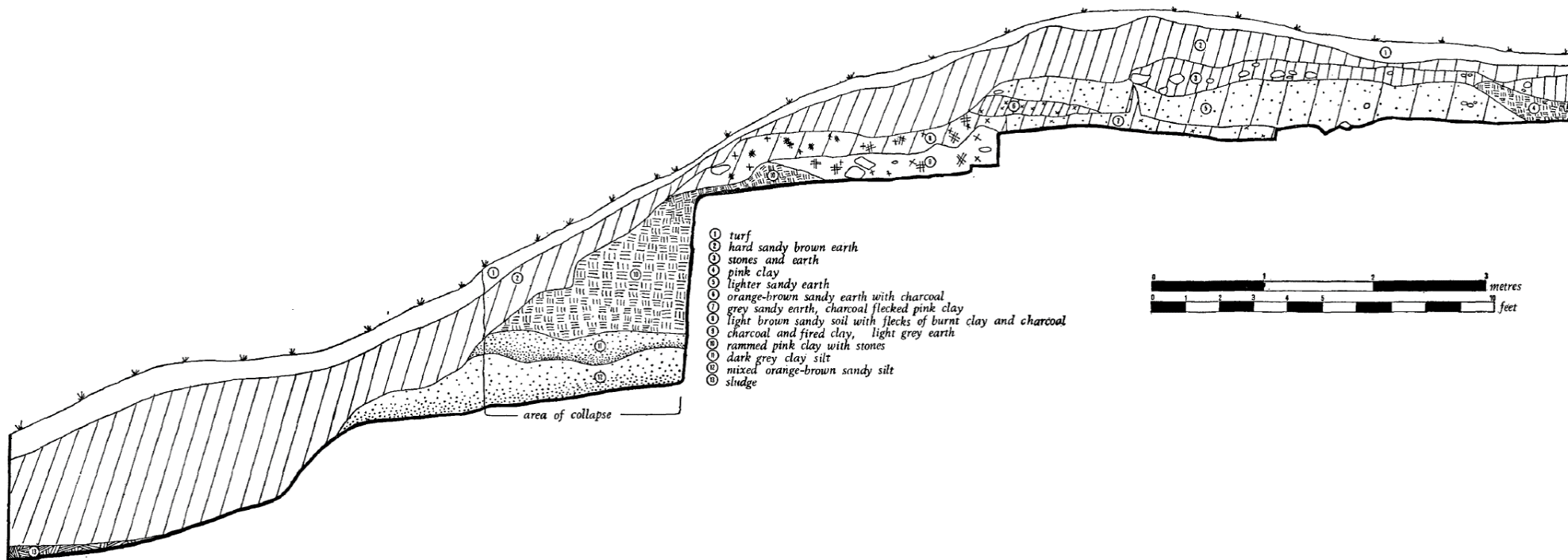


Fig. 5.12. West face of cutting II at Lochmaben Castle. Context 2 represents a rampart which has been slighted and pushed into the ditch. From Macdonald & Laing 1977, 141.

there are two events which stand out as likely candidates. In 1301 a Scottish force supposedly captured the pele and burnt it, and in 1385 Archibald Douglas captured the castle and according to one contemporary 'razed it to the ground' (Macdonald & Lain 1977, 124–126). As we have seen in the case of Caerlaverock the language of the Anglo-Scottish Wars emphasised the destructive nature of the conflict, which was not always evident in the archaeological record. So while it remains possible the slighted defences at Lochmaben represent an unrecorded event, it is more likely to relate to one of those documented from the 14<sup>th</sup> century. Given the reuse of ashlar in the drain, it probably dates to the stone phase of the site, resulting in a preference for the date of 1385.

**Coull Castle** (Aberdeenshire) in Scotland was discussed previously in relation to its ruined donjon and excavations also revealed the curtain walls were deliberately slighted. This applied to the north-west curtain wall (Fig. 4.10) which originally joined a projecting mural tower and the gatehouse. A trench next to the mural tower discovered that even the foundations of the curtain wall had been removed. The excavator noted that robbing could have accounted for some of the removal of stone but also noted the breaches in the east and south curtain walls were marked by straight breaks in the wall going down to the foundations, observing that the gaps 'do not in the least resemble the kind of destruction produced by the haphazard pulling to pieces of walls for lime or building material' (Simpson 1924, 69, 93). Nor would this be the pattern expected from an assault or siege. With accident, robbing, and attack ruled out there is only one logical conclusion. It is clear the wall was dismantled in an organised fashion, identifying this as an act of slighting.

In 1173, Robert Blanchemains was one of four leading English earls to support the rebellion of Henry the Young King against his father, Henry II. The rebellion ultimately failed in the following year (Warren 1973, 118–22). Though none of the leading rebels were executed, their property was explicitly targeted. This is evident at **Leicester** in the bailey ditch, as well as the motte ditch mentioned earlier. Excavations in 1939 just north of the Gateway Turret discovered the V-shaped bailey ditch, 12m wide and at least 4.2m deep. On the inner side of the ditch would have been a bank surmounted by a curtain wall as evidenced by building debris pushed down the side of the ditch from the inner side. On top of these layers of discarded building material were deposits of clay

that the excavator, F. Cottrill, deduced belonged to the bank (Fox 1944–45, 136–137). Taking the approach that the simplest explanation is the most preferable, in the absence of evidence of there being two separate destruction events or contradictory dating evidence it is reasonable to associate this on with the motte ditch. As it is, the pottery recovered from the ditch supports this as it dates from the late 11<sup>th</sup> or 12<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Though the slighting at **Radcot Castle** took place around the same time as that discovered at Danes Castle and Crowmarsh Gifford, it differed significantly in that Radcot was a stone castle at the time of its destruction. Trench 2 from the 2008 excavations mentioned earlier examined the gatehouse and the associated outer defences at that northern part of the site. The primary fill of the ditch was sealed by two subsequent fills which contained large amounts of rubble. As with the mortar layer found in association with the dismantled great tower, this layer contained 11<sup>th</sup>- and 12<sup>th</sup>-century pottery, indicating the ditch was filled in the 12<sup>th</sup> century. The primary fill was silt, which suggests the ditch had been dug significantly before the rubble was deposited. A separate deposit of mortar from cleaned stones indicates this was not natural collapse but deliberate demolition (Wessex Archaeology 2009, 10).

At **Buittle Castle** (Dumfries and Galloway) evidence of burning has also been discovered in the ditch. Though there have been 11 seasons of excavation at Buittle, the work has not yet been synthesised into a full report so we are dependent on brief updates to *Discovery and Excavation in Scotland* for information. At Buittle the early defences consisted of palisades and large timber towers. The excavator initially suggested the towers were set alight with fire arrows and allowed to tumble into the ditch (Penman 1995, 21). Continued excavation on the south bailey discovered a timber palisade extending round the south and east sides, with a stone wall on the north side which had been 'dismantled and tumbled into the fosse in antiquity, dated by pottery recovered from the rubble' (Penman and Cochrane 1997, 24). The excavators thought this datable phase was linked to the dismantling of the castle in 1313 by Robert Bruce. The castle was surrendered to Bruce after a siege, so it is possible that the area of burning could have been part of the siege, as suggested by Penman, while the rest of the defences were dismantled after the siege had concluded. This highlights some of the difficulties with trying to distinguish the one form of destruction from the other, as the events were so closely linked. As



at Bedford Castle, controlled demolition followed a siege. In this case the evidence is sufficient that a distinction can be drawn between the two, but it must be accepted that in other cases the line may not be so easily identified.

**Roxburgh Castle** (Roxburghshire) in the Scottish borders changed hands between English and Scottish troops several times over the course of its history. In a period in which it was supposedly slighted on multiple occasions, the incident that seems to have the greatest impact took place in 1460. James II of Scotland besieged the castle in July and in August was killed when one of his guns exploded (McGladdery 1990, 111–112). The siege continued (Brown, Colvin & Taylor 1963b, 820) until once the garrison succumbed, the king ordered the destruction of the castle, as recorded in the *Auchinleck Chronicle*, the Scottish ‘kest it doune to the erd and distroyit for ever’ (*Auchinleck Chronicle* f. 119v, in McGladdery 1990, 169). While the Scottish king’s death had not been directly caused by an Englishman, the control of Roxburgh Castle had long been a concern.

To the English, their possession of Roxburgh was a tremendous psychological advantage, held as it was on Scottish soil, with a garrison maintained at the cost of £1000 per annum in time of truce, and double that amount in wartime. To the Scots, it was an intolerable symbol of English occupation, and over it hung the spectre of James I’s ignominious failure to recapture it in 1436

McGladdery 1990, 111

There is no escaping the significance of this act. According to Canmore, no excavations have been undertaken at Roxburgh Castle, however a topographical survey was carried out between 2006 and 2009 (RCAHMS 2015). What is striking about Roxburgh Castle is how little survives above ground. As a rule, the poor survival of a castle should not be taken as proof that it was slighted, but in this case there are other factors which suggest human agency rather than natural decay. First, there is the documentary evidence that records the demolition, and later sources noting the poor condition of the site: in 1545 the Earl of Hertford noted that Roxburgh Castle was ‘altogither ruyned and fallen downe’ (RCAHMS 2015). Secondly, given the size of the castle for so much to have been destroyed indicates that not only was there human agency rather than decay, but that it was on a large scale, indicating an organised effort. It is one thing for a relatively small masonry castle to be robbed out, but for one on this scale to be reduced to such a state takes much more effort. At the north-east corner a D-shaped tower stands 3.5m tall, while a section of the

curtain wall still survives to a height of 5m on the south-eastern part of the circuit, but altogether the site was effectively reduced. The nearby town went into decline soon after so urban expansion did not contribute to the destruction of the castle, and it is unlikely the populace robbed it out to its current state on their own.

**Harbottle Castle** (Northumberland) is a 12<sup>th</sup>-century English castle and was rebuilt in stone in the 13th century (Hunter Blair 1935, 215–218). Alongside limited excavations undertaken by the University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne between 1997 and 1999, earthwork surveys were carried out. Ground penetrating radar (GPR) discovered the ditch surrounding the outer bailey contained large amounts of fallen masonry (Crow 2004, 248–249). The report on the survey suggested destruction layer was linked to the documented events of 1318, in which Robert Bruce captured the castle and dismantled it (Crow 2004, 246, 249). The situation is complicated by the fact a truce between Robert Bruce and Edward II stipulated which castles near the Anglo-Scottish border had to be destroyed. Harbottle was amongst these, with Edward II issuing orders to demolish the castle – which Bruce had previously captured – in 1320 (Penman 2009, 210). Attributing the destruction to either the Scots in 1318 or the English a few years later under the terms of the peace treaty remains an insoluble problem with the current evidence. While these reflect different social contexts – one attacking English lordship, the other as a compromise between two parties – it can still be concluded that the masonry at Harbottle is evidence of slighting, and symbolic of the tensions along the border between Scotland and England.

On the Cheshire–Lancashire border sits the stone enclosure castle of **Buckton** (Cheshire). Excavations between 2007 and 2010 returned little evidence of inhabitation, and indicated the site had never been completed. What little pottery was recovered indicated a late 12<sup>th</sup>-century date for the construction of the castle (Grimsditch, Nevell & Nevell 2012, 80–81). There is an unusual projection immediately west of the castle (Fig. 5.13). The excavators hypothesised that this might represent an outwork and a trial trench was opened to test this theory. Sandstone rubble was encountered, similar to the material which had been used to level-up the interior of the castle. Two possibilities were suggested: it could represent a spoil heap from the clearing of the ditch, or possibly a remnant from the construction of the castle as suggested

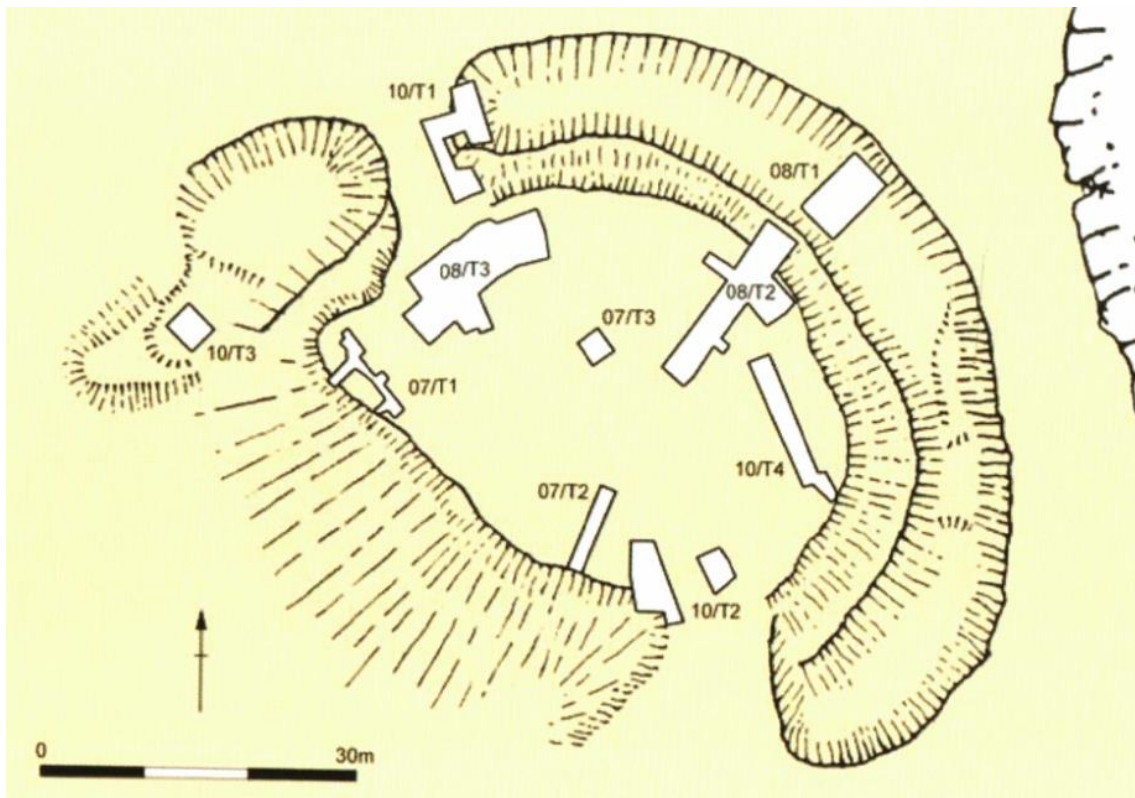


Fig. 5.13. A plan of Buckton Castle showing the excavations between 2007 and 2010. Note the unusual projection to the west. From Grimsditch, Nevell & Nevell 2012, 57.

happened with the earthworks at Burwell Castle (Grimsditch, Nevell & Nevell 2012, 82; Wright *et al.* 2016). This thesis adds a third scenario, the possibility that this rubble deposit represents the deliberate partial demolition of the curtain wall. Such a projection is highly unusual, and is evocative of the intrusions into the ditch at Castell Bryn Amlwg (Fig. 4.8). Whereas in the case of the Welsh castle these corresponded to locations of towers, at Buckton the deposit perhaps represents a heap of stone left over when the castle was destroyed. This is especially likely as the west face of the castle was the side which overlooked Cheshire. The site has views across half the county on a clear day. As much as it would have been a statement of authority when it was built, visible for miles around, the specific collapse of the section of curtain wall most visible to the inhabitants of Cheshire was also a statement of undermining that authority. A trench was cut to establish the profile of the ditch on the north-east side of the castle (08/T1 on Fig. 5.13). This revealed that a re-cut of the ditch was followed by a deposit of stone rubble. The layer not only contained rubble but ashlar blocks, indicating the site had not been extensively robbed by the time the wall was demolished (Grimsditch, Nevell & Nevell 2012, 62–64). This must be taken as evidence that the destruction happened soon after the ditch

was re-cut, and taken in conjunction with the evidence on the west of the site points towards it being deliberate.

As is the case with Buittle, we are reliant on interim reports for **Nevern Castle** (Pembrokeshire) though this is because the excavations are ongoing. The banks and ditches enclosing the site do not extend to the south of the castle because of steep natural slopes, and the only part of this system which has been excavated so far is the northern section (trenches D and DD in Fig. 4.4a). The excavation discovered the north side of the bank – that facing outside the castle – had a layer of slate rubble, most likely from a curtain wall on top of the rampart (Caple 2010b, 4). If this was found in isolation this evidence would have been inconclusive, perhaps indicating collapse through decay. However, the extent of destruction found on the site – in the donjon, the square tower in the inner castle, with burning around the gatehouse and great hall – indicates this was part of a deliberate programme of slighting.

In 1228 the two Devonshire castles at **Great Torrington** and Barnstaple were demolished (Higham & Goddard 1987, 97). A watching brief at the former in 2005 recorded dumps of levelling material containing stone fragments and the excavators assumed the material originated from the rampart (Whiteaway 2005). Evidence to date the destruction was unfortunately not recovered, but in the absence of dating evidence to the contrary the simplest conclusion would be that it relates to the 1228 event. It is of course important to acknowledge it may date to another period, so further excavation would be desirable especially since far the site's ditches have not yet been examined. These would offer insight into destruction of the castle and perhaps confirm the period in which it took place. Importantly, rubble deposits were found elsewhere on the site, evidencing extensive destruction which based on the methodology outlined in Chapter 3 qualifies as slighting.

### **5.2.1 Discussion**

Typically, a castle's ramparts, ditches, and curtain walls receive more attention from archaeologists. Ditches in particular offer a chance to establish the chronology of a site and may offer potential for absolute dating and environmental evidence, while the walls may illustrate where a structure has been repaired and how it has been adapted over the centuries. In terms of demolition, there is a considerable body of evidence showing these features of

the castle were often prioritised for destruction. Of particular interest are cases where walls have been reduced in height rather than demolished to ground level. While Henry III ordered the walls of the outer bailey at Bedford to be completely demolished, those of the 'lesser bailey' were only to be reduced in height (Baker *et al.* 1979a, 11). As quoted in Chapter 3.3.4, in 1228 he also gave orders to reduce the walls of Barnstaple Castle to a height of 10ft (*Close Rolls 1227–1231*, 70). However, this is very difficult to demonstrate through excavation as shown by excavations at the castle in the 1970s; though they examined part of the motte and the north part of the bailey's bank there was no evidence of slighting (Miles 1986, 59–61, 71–73), which is at least partly due to post-medieval disturbance. This ties in with the hypothesis that battlements were particularly targeted for destruction. To the modern eye architectural elements such as battlements, arrowloops, and murderholes are an integral part of castles. Though overtly defensive – and approached as exclusively so until relatively recently – they had symbolic overtones (Wheatley 2004, 2). This is perhaps best understood through the lens of Charles Coulson's influential work on the symbolism of castle architecture, with an emphasis on licences to crenellate. From the 13<sup>th</sup> century onwards in particular these documents allowed an 'architectural affirmation of nobility' (Coulson 1979, 85) and the crenellations had taken on a symbolic role. The owner of the castle had all the rights of defending his property and owning a castle because he was noble. The very existence of the castle was proof of this and differed from an unfortified home. This would explain why the outermost parts of the castle were often targeted for destruction. Much like the architecture itself, the act of destruction could fulfil a variety of roles. It could make the site harder to defend – even impractical to do so – while publicly stripping away what made a castle a castle, or alternatively what marked a lord as a lord. On 25<sup>th</sup> August 1317, Edward II ordered the destruction of Harbottle Castle as part of a treaty with Robert Bruce, stipulating 'the castle may be destroyed in the best and most secret manner' (*Patent Rolls of Edward II 1321–1324*, 21–22; Hunter Blair 1949, 145). While Edward II did not directly control the castle, clearly being forced to dismantle your own fortifications was a shameful situation, which explains why this unusual secrecy was required.

Material traces of destruction are not always easy to identify, as discussed in Chapter 3. Ditches are likely locations for destruction layers and

dating evidence, however Luton Castle (Bedfordshire) provides an example where the archaeological evidence is equivocal. In 1139 Robert de Waudari built a castle at Luton in support of Stephen's campaign against Matilda and was it slighted in 1154 as part of the Treaty of Winchester (Coles 2005, 206). The identification of the site is uncertain, and a later castle was built on a separate site, but it likely corresponds with the fortification discovered on Castle Street. Excavations in 2002 and 2004–2005 examined the south and south-east ditch respectively and produced contrasting evidence, though they were only 15m apart. The 2002 excavation found a series of twelve contexts, indicating a process of steady erosion (Coles 2005, 204–206). However, while five erosion contexts with a cumulative depth of around 0.5m were evident in the ditch section from the later excavations they were sealed by another deposit 0.5m deep. No evidence for the date of the fill as recovered, and the excavator was tentative in suggesting this might represent slighting after the Anarchy and also suggested that it could be natural erosion (Abrams & Shotliff 2010, 392, 400). This only reduced the ditch by about a third, and this this is a small deposit compared to the likes of Weston Turville (1.25m – about half the ditch), Boteler's Castle (1.35m – about half the depth of the ditch) where a reasonably narrow ditch was deliberately filled as opposed to containing debris from a building. The thicker deposit indicates could reasonably be attributed to severe collapse from sudden weathering, so the site is listed in Appendix 2 rather than grouped with the main sites in Appendix 1. More extensive excavation at Luton may help decide whether this is evidence of slighting as mentioned in the documentary record.

Overall, the evidence from castle ditches suggests they were amongst the most likely areas of a castle to be targeted for destruction when slighting was undertaken. Even when the reasons behind a destruction layer may be unclear, destruction activity elsewhere on the site would be a strong indicator that a castle has been slighted.

### **5.3 Entrances and mural towers**

As is typical of castle studies in the past three decades, the understanding of gatehouses has shifted from being primarily military to one which incorporates social aspects. The military view was encapsulated by Derek Renn (1988, 5) who wrote 'Entrances were always the most vulnerable parts of castles'. This

line of thinking espoused that gatehouses gradually became more complex in order to defend the weakest part of the castle. This has been superseded by a more nuanced view, and these structures are now understood as a focus of display. The great double gatehouse at Brougham Castle (Cumbria) for instance ‘displays itself and its lord to the outside world while proclaiming its inaccessibility; it sets the social order in stone’ (Johnson 2002, 138). On occasion, gatehouses could take over from great towers as the focus of display as is the case at Lancaster (Lancashire), where the 15<sup>th</sup>-century gatehouse was depicted on the town’s seal as it was the most readily identifiable aspect of the castle (Nevell 2012–13, 267). Logically this would heighten the possibility that a gatehouse might be slighted. In urban contexts ‘invariably the gatehouse faced into the town’ (Creighton 2002, 138). This not only made access easier but emphasised the role of the castle in the lives of the town’s inhabitants.

Towers of all types, including those belonging to gatehouses, fulfilled a range of domestic as well as military roles. They might contain strong rooms in the basement for storage (Cockermouth, Cumberland), chapels for the household (Goodrich, Herefordshire), or accommodation (Dover, Kent) (Nevell 2012–13, 263; Renn 1993, 7–8; Coad 2007, 29). This blend of overt military strength and practical and social uses is paralleled in the great tower. However, the similarities in use are not typically evident in how the gatehouses were treated when a castle was slighted.

Table 5.2. Castles with slighted gatehouses.

<b>Name</b>	<b>County</b>	<b>OS grid coordinates</b>	<b>Date slighted</b>	<b>Method of destruction</b>	<b>Reference</b>
Buckton	Cheshire	SD983016	Late 12 <sup>th</sup> century	Burning; digging	Grimsditch, Nevell & Nevell 2012
Coull	Aberdeenshire	NJ513022	14 <sup>th</sup> century	Picking; burning	Simpson 1924
Degannwy	Caernarfonshire	SH782795	1263	Picking; undermining	Alcock 1968
Dryslwyn	Carmarthenshire	SN554204	1407	Burning; undermining	Caple 2007
Nevern	Pembrokeshire	SN082402	1195	Undermining; burning	Caple 2010a; Caple 2011
Penmaen	Glamorgan	SS534880	13 <sup>th</sup> century	Burning	Alcock 1966

Radcot	Oxfordshire	SU285996	12 <sup>th</sup> century	Picking	Wessex Archaeology 2009
Weoley	Warwickshire	SP022828	1320–80	Picking	Oswald 1962; Linnane 2011

Extensive excavations at **Dryslwyn Castle** (Carmarthenshire) discussed previously provided evidence of slighting in the entrances to both the inner and outer enclosures. The 15<sup>th</sup>-century destruction is represented differently in each gatehouse. At the inner gatehouse, iron hinge pillars were removed and the lead melted, and stone stair treads were removed presumably for use elsewhere. This was followed by a fire that consumed the inner ward: the timber guardhouse was burnt and the gatehouse roof collapse. Following this, further attempts to demolish the castle are evident as the base of one of the gatehouse walls was picked away and scorched, indicating it had been undermined (Caple 2007, 84). At the outer gatehouse the gatepassage was compromised by the construction of a 1.5m-thick mortared wall. This was then followed by the theft of dressed stone and the collapse of the rubble walls (Caple 2007, 145–146). The destruction layers inside the castle show that it consisted of two distinct phases and soil was allowed to accumulate in-between: the first where passages were blocked and buildings burned and the second consisted of demolishing the walls. This is paralleled at the gatehouse, and the attempted mining was possibly undertaken by the English completing the slighting of the castle after the Welsh rebels had wrecked and abandoned Dryslwyn. A 1.5m-thick wall was a substantial obstacle to overcome and could conceivably have been a measure to hinder access and strengthen the castle if the garrison were desperate and had no hope of aid or sallying. However, the wider use of blocked passages in the castle suggests the intent was to prevent access not to attackers but whoever wanted to use the castle.

A strong case has already been advanced above that part of the curtain wall of **Buckton Castle** was deliberately pulled down. Excavations in the gatehouse discovered a layer of burnt material (clay and silt) within the gate passage. The unusual location of the fire indicates it may have been part of the destruction phase (Grimsditch, Nevell & Nevell 2012, 73–74). It would certainly have been unusual to have a fire in the gate passage while it was in use, which points towards disrupted occupancy. This north-west part of the site would have been both particularly visible, and the strongest part of the castle; both of which



would be strong reasons to focus efforts on demolishing the gatehouse as it combines a prominent statement of authority over the owner with rendering the castle difficult to defend. The 12<sup>th</sup>-century structure is the earliest known stone gatehouse in North West England (Nevell 2012–13, 249); whilst vaulting was typical in stone gatehouses of the region, in such an early example a timber roof may have been preferred, which might explain why fire was used within the passage. Above the burnt layer were multiple phases of rubble material. The first deposit was most likely due to the demolition of the structure, with subsequent layers a result of weathering resulting in collapse (Grimsditch, Nevell & Nevell 2012, 74). Importantly burnt material was not found elsewhere on the site, indicating that the destruction was a focussed event.

At **Degannwy** (Caernarfonshire) the destruction of 1263 at the hands of Llywelyn ap Gruffydd was devastating. The excavations found the gatehouse – with a typical plan of the period consisting of a gate passage between two D-shaped towers – was undermined along with the rest of the defences (Alcock 1968, 192).

Excavations at **Coull Castle** (Aberdeenshire) in 1912–14 and 1923 discovered a circular donjon and examined parts of the castle's interior. An excavation in the pit in front of the gatehouse uncovered a thick layer of charcoal and burnt material sealed by rubble and ashlar (Simpson 1924, 71). The burning evidently preceded the collapse of the gatehouse. These two events could perhaps be ascribed to an assault, but the donjon and extensive sections of the curtain wall were also damaged. While it is certainly possible there was some fighting at Coull Castle, perhaps even focussed around the gatehouse, the extent to which the structure was damaged suggests slighting was the main culprit. Only fragments of the gatehouse survive above ground. Charcoal was also discovered inside the mural towers (Simpson 1924, 92); as these were stone structures accessed from within the castle rather than without, this thesis proposes that fire was caused with the intention of slighting the castle. The mural towers were also partially demolished, particularly the westernmost tower (Fig. 4.10).

At **Nevern Castle** (Pembrokeshire) there is evidence for burning within the square tower at the east end of the site – dubbed the inner castle (Fig. 4.4a) – and the south-west entrance, investigated by trench S. With the square tower a layer of burning was discovered in the interior and the stonework was

scorched; the fire was ferocious enough that it partly melted the slate which had collapsed inside the tower (Caple 2010a, 2–3; Caple 2011, 4). Excavations at the gateway found that it too was covered in rubble from the demolition of the building, but a later posthole marks an attempt to repair the castle (Caple 2011, 5). Evidence for repair at Nevern is generally restricted to the entrance (Caple 2011, 7), and the most likely reason for this is that it allowed the local populace to enter the site so they could remove building materials and use the land for agriculture.

The location of a possible entrance at **Weoley Castle** (Warwickshire) was inferred when a gravel causeway was discovered in the northeast corner of the moat. As mentioned earlier, the destruction phase was dated to 1320–1380 based on artefact evidence, namely pottery, glass, and tiles (Oswald 1962, 61–63). Associated with this was the discovery of evidence of a collapsed tower; finds included ‘An iron grill, probably part of a window, and a wooden door with stone door jambs’ (Oswald 1962, 64). Above this deposit was a layer of puddled clay used to line the moat so it would retain water. It was the third layer of its kind discovered in the moat, and builder’s rubbish between the second and third layers discovered elsewhere on the site indicated extensive rebuilding during this period, suggested to date to 1350–1400 (Oswald 1962, 64). Writing in 2011, Barbican Research Associates were of the opinion that

The idea of a disastrous demolition – nobody would have wasted such a significant quantity of expensive iron [the grill] – followed by a major re-build is attractive but further proof is lacking for this and a historical context has not yet been identified

Linnane 2011, 64

The lack of documentary sources mentioning the destruction does not need to be a hindrance; at Weoley there are two broadly contemporary areas of destruction. One might have been interpreted as accident or remodelling, but two at opposite ends of the site suggests it was deliberate. Moreover, as was indicated earlier the lack of interest in preserving valuable materials does not suggest remodelling was a concern.

The gate tower at **Castle Tower, Penmaen** (Glamorgan) was destroyed by fire. The excavations that took place between 1960 and 1961 (Alcock 1966, 178–182) examined the parts of the ringwork’s interior, a partial section of the surrounding ditch, and the entrance (Fig. 5.14). The 6m by 6m timber gate tower was the most substantial aspect of Penmaen; only one other structure

has been found within the area enclosed by the castle in its first phase, and was much smaller, measuring 5.0m by 3.6m (Alcock 1966, 183–184, 191). As such, the excavator Alcock suggested the gate tower provided the most significant accommodation at the castle, some 36m<sup>2</sup> (Alcock 1966, 187). The gate tower would have been the focus of the castle, not simply militarily but also socially. The fact the fire that consumed the gate tower was so fierce it turned the limestone of the rampart to lime indicates the tower was utterly destroyed. Moreover, the interior of the castle was excavated and no evidence the fire affect this area was recovered (Alcock 1966, 196). The fact the fire did not spread suggests a narrow focus on the most important structure on the site.

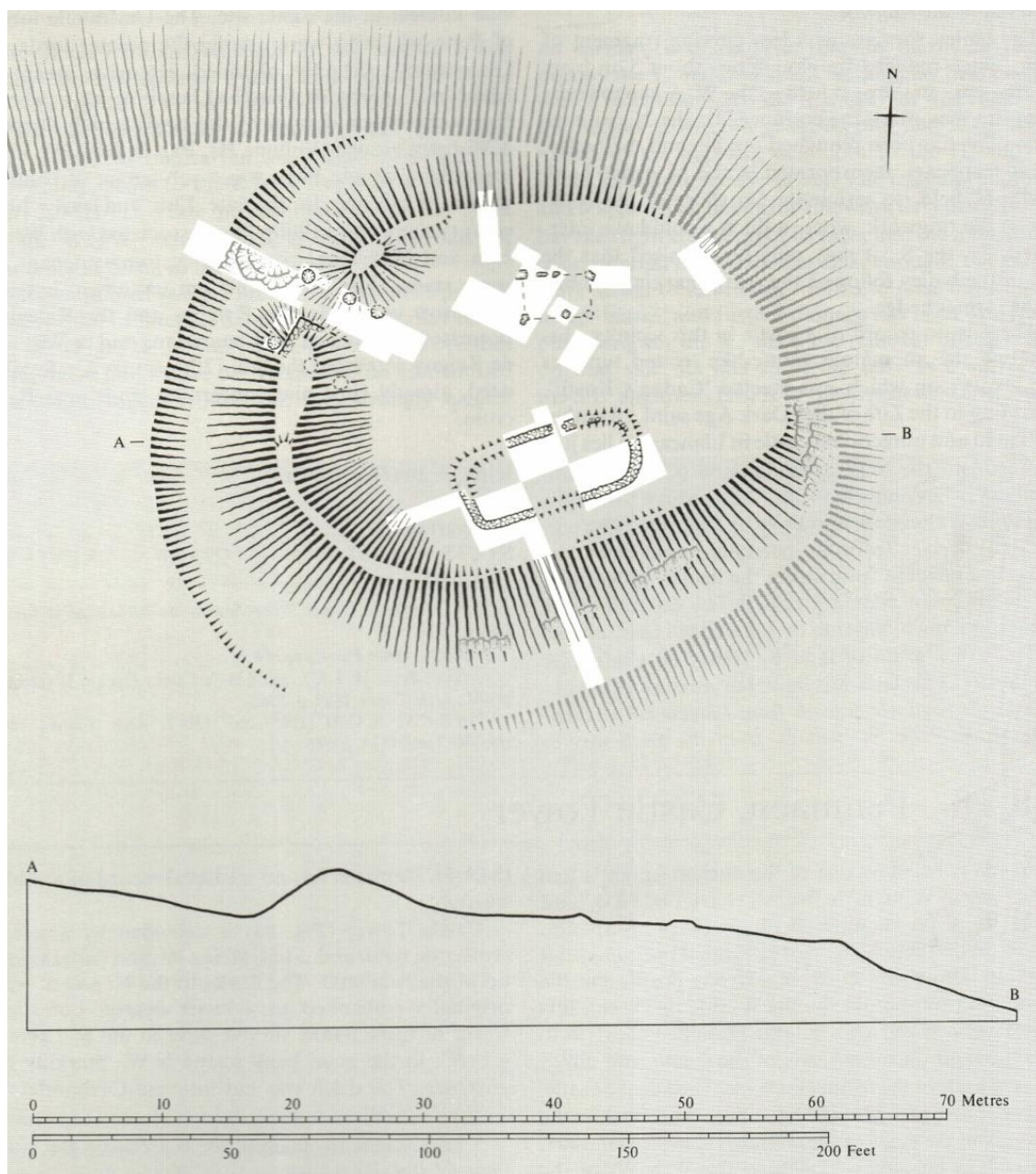


Fig. 5.14. Plan of excavations at Penmaen Castle. From RCAHMW 1991, 124.

Pottery evidence indicates the castle was in use in the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries, but the destruction event cannot be dated more closely (Alcock 1966, 195). In Alcock's opinion the timber building measuring 5.0m by 3.6m in the castle's interior was probably dismantled rather than allowed to decay as no nails were recovered, while the postholes had no postpipe and had a jumbled fill indicating the timbers had been removed rather than left to decay. This posed a problem for the excavators in their interpretation. They suggested the fire could have been the result of an accident because the damage was not reflected in the interior, the implication being that if it had been deliberate the whole site would have been engulfed. Meanwhile the dismantling of the timber building confused matters further (Alcock 1966, 190–191, 195–196). Instead this thesis proposes that fire was deliberately used to destroy the most militarily significant building on the site, and the hall later dismantled – this sequence is likely as the postholes did not contain ash, which could easily have been blown in by the wind had the structure been dismantled before the gate tower was burned. The focus on the gate tower would be consistent with the activity seen at Buckton Castle where no other major structure has been discovered and would mirror the slighting of Leicester in 1173. As far as historical context is concerned, Penmaen Castle may have been amongst the fortifications destroyed by Rhys Gryg in 1217 when Llywelyn the Great tried to force the English out of Wales (RCAHMW 1991, 126–127). Certainly, this would lend weight to the theory that Penmaen was slighted as it would represent an attack on the authority of the non-Welsh lords of the area.

The gatehouse at **Radcot Castle** was located on the north side of the site. The area was excavated in 2008 and the former site of the gatehouse discovered. Material from the walls had been removed, leaving no facing stone, indicating it had been deliberately dismantled. The gatehouse itself did not produce datable artefacts, and the Wessex Archaeology report on the excavations was cautious about assigning a date to the destruction of the gatehouse (Wessex Archaeology 2009, 10). However, the evidence on other parts of the site means the most likely situation is that it was slighted in the 12<sup>th</sup> century along with the great tower, the chapel, and at least the northern part of the defensive ditch. It is improbable that the great tower and chapel would have been systematically dismantled; rubble thrown into the ditch, but that the gatehouse would have been left standing.

### 5.3.1 Discussion

The most striking feature of this study of towers and gatehouses is how infrequently they seem to have been slighted, despite the fact they might have made appealing targets both militarily and symbolically. Mural towers enhanced a castle's defensive capabilities whilst expanding the accommodation and domestic space available. Gatehouses, which could be complex and monumental structures, were a focus of display and social activity. By damaging these structures, belligerents would be striking a blow against the military and social roles of the castle. Instead those involved in the destruction of castles focused on other areas. This is partly because gatehouses became particularly complex architecturally from the second half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, while most of the castle slighting in England and Wales took place in the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries. The point at which gatehouses became more significant coincided with fewer instances of slighting.

That is not to say that under the right circumstances towers and gatehouses would not be slighted. At Buckton and Penmaen for example, the gate tower was the most important feature of the castle as demonstrated by the fact they were the largest structures on the site and probably offered the most comfortable accommodation. When a castle's strength and status was invested in a tower we might anticipate that it would attract attention from those who wished to undermine such aspects. Gatehouses were usually slighted either as part of a widespread programme of slighting with the castle or when it was the most significant socio-military part of the complex.

## Chapter 6 – Castles, slighting, and domesticity

### 6.1 Introduction

Intra-mural areas comprise anything enclosed by the castle walls or ramparts. As great towers are treated separately this section includes halls and chapels as well as generally lower status domestic buildings. In contrast to great towers and the defences in general, the areas within castles are a source of information on 'the everyday lives of fortified sites' (Creighton 2002, 9). Our understanding of the 'outer core' as it is dubbed by McNeill (2006, 71) leaves room for improvement. Some aspects of halls and kitchens are relatively well understood, but other uses less so. The contrast is because while halls and kitchen are permanent structures or at least significant enough to only undergo occasional remodelling or replacement, other structures and associated activities were more ephemeral. As a result, they might have been the first to be cleared in the post-medieval period, degrading the archaeological record. Overall an investigation of the treatment of intra-mural areas during slighting is mostly a study of how domestic areas were treated.

This category includes freestanding structures which were primarily used as halls or chapels, ostensibly domestic features of a castle. There are few definite cases of chapels or halls being deliberately and violently demolished. Importantly, though there are examples of chapels and halls as free-standing purpose-built structures within castles, they could often be found within larger structures. A great tower for instance could house a hall, but larger and more prestigious halls were often separate structures (Brown 1984, 66–68). Similarly, chapels could be integrated into great towers, towers, or the upper storeys of gatehouses, or be separate structures altogether (Creighton 2002, 125). For example, at Chester Castle (Cheshire), the Agricola Tower was built c. 1200, and as well as acting as the main entrance to the castle housed a chapel above the gate passage (Barrow *et al.* 2005, 204–213). In contrast, the distinctive 11<sup>th</sup>-century chapel at Ludlow Castle (Shropshire) was a free-standing building (Coppack 2000, 145–146). It was not uncommon for a castle to have multiple chapels and on occasion, chapels have been misidentified as halls (Hislop 2013, 190), and as will be seen in the case of Degannwy. When all that remains is a floor plan, especially an incomplete one, it may not be possible to

distinguish between the two, resulting in merely being able to say it was a high-status building.

Table 6.1. Castles with slighted interiors.

Name	County	OS grid reference	Date slighted	Method of destruction	Reference
Bedford	Bedfordshire	TL053497	1224	Picking	Baker <i>et al.</i> 1979a
Caergwrle	Flintshire	SJ3070572	1283	Burning, picking	Manley 1994
Degannwy	Caernarfonshire	SH782795	1263	Picking; undermining	Alcock 1968
Dryslwyn	Carmarthenshire	SN554204	1407	Burning; undermining	Caple 2007
Dudley	Staffordshire	SO947907	1175	Picking; burning	Boland 1984
Dyserth	Flintshire	SJ060799	1263	Picking, burning, undermining	Cox 1895
Eynsford	Kent	TQ542658	1312	Picking	Rigold 1972
Great Torrington	Devon	SS497190	1228	Digging; picking	Higham & Goddard 1987
Ingleston Motte	Dumfries and Galloway	NX775580	1185	Burning	Bradley & Gaimster 2000
Ludgershall	Wiltshire	SU264512	Second half of the 12 <sup>th</sup> century	Picking	Ellis 2000a
Mountsorrel	Leicestershire	SK582150	1217	Picking	Creighton 1997
Nantcribba	Montgomeryshire	SJ237014	1263	Burning	Spurgeon 1962
Nevern	Pembrokeshire	SN082402	1195	Undermining; burning	Caple 2010a
Pennard	Glamorgan	SS544885	12 <sup>th</sup> or 13 <sup>th</sup> century	Burning	Alcock 1961
Radcot	Oxfordshire	SU285996	11 <sup>th</sup> or 12 <sup>th</sup> century	Picking	Wessex Archaeology 2009
Sheffield	Yorkshire	SK358877	1266	Burning	Richardson & Dennison 2014a
Weoley	Warwickshire	SP022828	1320–80	Picking	Oswald 1962

In the cases which follow two key themes emerge. First, there are destruction deposits of building material similar to those found in ditches and discussed previously. In the same way that refuse would be cleared away from high status buildings the discovery of rubble in a castle's interior is suggestive of disrupted activity: finding it across high-status structures or over much of the castle indicates these structures were no longer used (Alcock 1987, 18–19). In

some instances, it may be a makeup layer, or debris from building work, but in the latter case at least we would expect to find flecks of mortar as opposed to massive rubble. The second trend is that in 9 of the 17 castles discussed, the interior showed signs of burning. When encountering evidence of fire three main possibilities present themselves: accidental fire; fire deliberately used to slight a castle; and deliberate fire during an attack (which is the least likely).

Distinguishing between the three is a challenge outlined in the methodology (Chapter 3). Within this subset of burnt sites most (6) are found in Wales, with two in each of England and Scotland. Because the castles that succumbed to fire form the majority of the sites, we will consider this group first.

At **Dryslwyn** (Carmarthenshire) a layer of burning was discovered in the inner ward, overlain by rubble, with collapsed roofs in the buildings. The burning and the collapse of the walls formed two discrete events as demonstrated by a layer of soil that formed over the burnt material. The site director speculated this would have taken weeks, perhaps months to accumulate (Caple 2007, 134, 140). Passages within the castle were deliberately blocked including one connecting the great hall and high-status apartments and the passage leading into the round tower. Moreover, iron and timbers were removed before the burning started. Caple (2007, 53–54) observed ‘The thoroughness with which this was done indicates an organised stripping process prior to burning and demolition’. The walling up of passages would hinder anyone trying to access the castle, and is an unusual, even unprecedented, form of disruption, given that this has not been found in any of the other examples discussed in this chapter. Garderobe chutes next to the circular donjon were blocked with stone, creating waste removal problems for anyone who wanted to use castle (Caple 2007, 65–67).

The stripping out of timbers and fixtures shows that the burning within the interior was a pre-meditated act. Fire could strip out floors and interiors, making towers unusable without repair. The extent and coordination of the efforts – removing valuable materials before burning the castle – suggests the perpetrators were in no hurry. Similarly, the removal of carved freestone and the construction of blockages in the passages would have involved considerable effort, contrasting with the relative ease of fire as a mode of destruction. It is unlikely that the Welsh holding the castle during the rebellion would have had the time or resources to slight the castle in this manner once it became clear



they were on the losing side of the conflict. Therefore, it is likely the English carried out the slighting after they took control of the castle towards the end of the conflict. Interestingly, the layer of charcoal distributed across the site was up to 0.7m in the great hall. This contrasts with the notable case of Leicester Castle where the great hall was excluded from the slighting of the castle. Instead the intention here appears to have been to remove not just the military value of the site but its value as a central place with a function as a place of governance or where people might gather.

Excavations at **Dyserth** (Flintshire) in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century found large amounts of rubble within the castle and burnt timbers (Cox 1895, 378). While the documented history is an important piece of corroborating evidence, the combination of two methods of destruction is in itself indicative of slighting. The fact that the castle, like Degannwy's later phase, was built by Henry III would account for the extreme use of force, beyond that required merely to capture the castle.

**Sheffield Castle** (Yorkshire) illustrates the complexities of castle studies and correlating the archaeological record to documented history. The castle was damaged by fire around 1184–85 (the repair was document in the Pipe Rolls) and again in 1266. The second incident was after an attack by John de Evyll as part of the Second Barons' War when the owner, Thomas de Furnival, held the castle for the royalists (Richardson & Dennison 2014a, 9–10). While nothing remains of the castle above ground (Fig. 6.1) – it was slighted in the 17<sup>th</sup> century – excavations in the 1920s ahead of the construction of modern buildings provided some evidence of medieval destruction layers. A 0.3m-thick layer of burning was observed 'quite widely across the market site' (Richardson & Dennison 2014a, 46). The extent and depth of the layer indicates a significant event and may relate to either destructive episode in the site's documented history. A separate observation recorded a layer of ashes but cannot be accurately located on the plan. Both contexts were interpreted as deriving from the 1266 event, but as noted by Ed Dennison Archaeological Services the layer of ashes was approximately 3.6m lower than the 0.3m-thick layer of burning (Richardson & Dennison 2014a, 52, 73). It is likely this is material evidence of both destructive events.

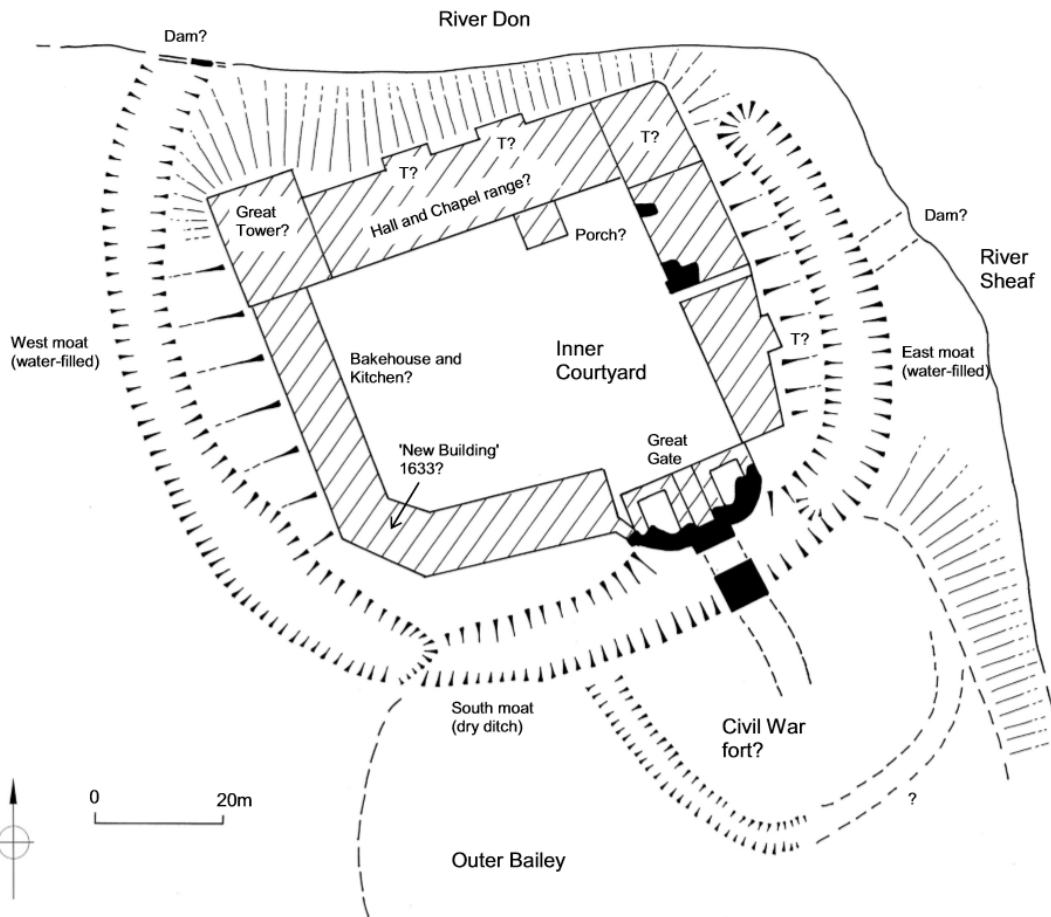


Fig. 6.1. Reconstructed plan of Sheffield Castle, showing just how little is known of the site. Areas in solid black show excavated masonry. From Richardson & Dennison 2014b, 26.

There are two important facets to understanding the destruction at **Nevern Castle** (Pembrokeshire). First, it is so extensive that it cannot be considered accidental and is beyond what would have been inflicted during an assault. Secondly, there are documentary sources which inform us that in 1195 Hywel Sais slighted the castle so it could not be used by the English (Capple 2015, 2). This gives important context for the evidence of destruction found at the great hall. Excavations discovered the floor of the hall was overlain with rubble and burnt material, indicating a violent end. In other parts of the castle a lean-to was found to have been burnt, and all that remains is slate roof tiles on top of a layer of charcoal (Capple 2010a, 4–5). An articulated horse leg was found in the entrance of one of the buildings of the south range (Capple 2008, 4), indicating a hurried end to the castle.

Before its defences were rebuilt in stone, **Pennard Castle** (Glamorgan) consisted of a ringwork with a timber palisade enclosing a 5.2m by 15.2m stone-built hall block. Small-scale excavations discovered the stone hall – dated to the 13<sup>th</sup> century based on its form – was built over a layer of charcoal and

burnt daub, perhaps an earlier timber phase of the castle's hall (Alcock 1961, 81). According to the RCAHMW (1991, 288) the ringwork probably dates to the 12<sup>th</sup> century. If the stone hall dates to the 13<sup>th</sup> century as Alcock suggested, it is likely that the timber hall was broadly contemporary with the early castle. The only published documents relating to the excavations are short reports in *Morgannwg* and *Medieval Archaeology*. The presence of an extensive charcoal deposit at the heart of the castle complex indicates that fire was deliberately introduced to the site. The use of fire is characteristic of slighting contexts found in the intra-mural areas of Welsh castles, indicating that the earlier phase at Pennard was slighted.

**Dudley Castle** (Staffordshire) was slighted in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, but more unusually it also underwent slighting in the 12<sup>th</sup> century. Excavations in 1984 on the area between the chapel and gatehouse (Fig. 6.2) discovered that a 16<sup>th</sup>-century building had been built over a destruction layer and the foundations dug into this material. The layer demonstrated that a stone building on the site had been demolished and occupation levels had been exposed to fire. As this clearly predated the Civil War destruction, the excavators concluded this most likely correlated with the orders from Henry II to slight the castle in 1175, after the owner supported Henry the Young King in his failed rebellion against his father (Boland 1984, 17). With no other documented episodes of slighting in the Middle Ages at Dudley, this is the most likely scenario.

It has already been mentioned that the timber tower at **Ingleston Motte** (Dumfries and Galloway) was most likely deliberately burned. Evidence of burning was discovered elsewhere; the activity was focused on a timber structure possibly used for accommodation. The excavators postulated that it was associated with a civil war in Galloway in 1174, or 1185 when the area changed hands (Bradley & Gaimster 2000, 329–330). This structure seems to have had little impact on the site's military importance, which emphasises the importance of slighting as a social act. This is especially relevant if it took place in the context of a local civil war, as slighting an enemy's holdings could weaken them militarily and diminish their prestige.

**Caergwrle Castle** (Flintshire) is a stone-built enclosure castle dating to the second half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century. In 1282 the castle's owner, Dafydd ap Gruffyd who had received money from the English king to build the castle, rebelled against Edward I. The English king moved to crush the rebellion and

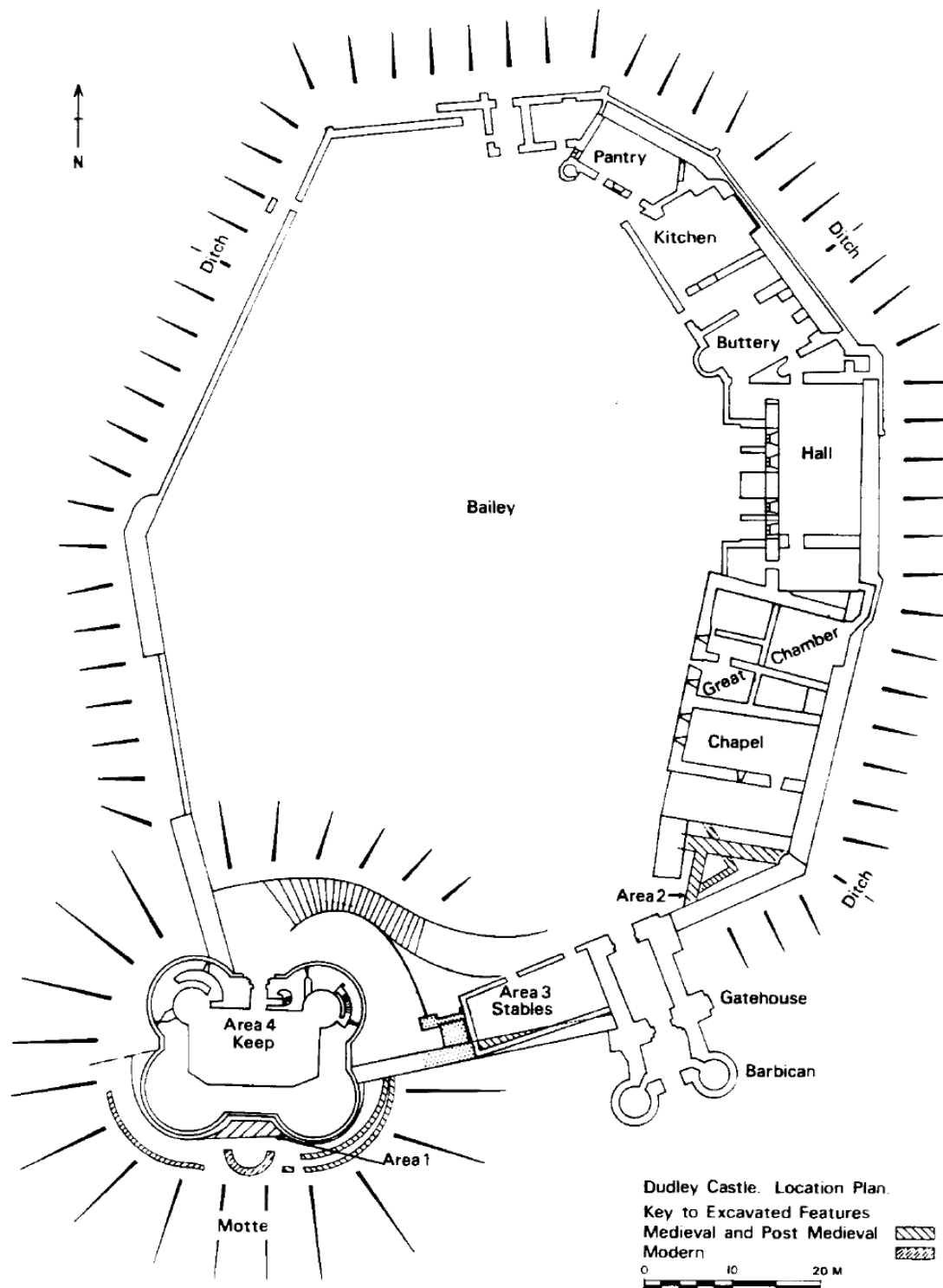


Fig. 6.2. A plan of Dudley Castle showing the areas excavated in 1984. Possible 12<sup>th</sup>-century destruction contexts were discovered in areas 1 and 2. From Boland 1984, 2.

when he reached Caergwrle the castle was abandoned and partially dismantled. Excavations between 1988 and 1990 focussed largely on the inner enclosure, with one trench examining the rampart of the outer enclosure (Manley 1994, 86–88). Within the northern part of the enclosure a timber building of unknown purpose was identified by the line of burnt clay and daub it left behind (Fig. 6.3). Similarly, a burnt timber frame was discovered behind the

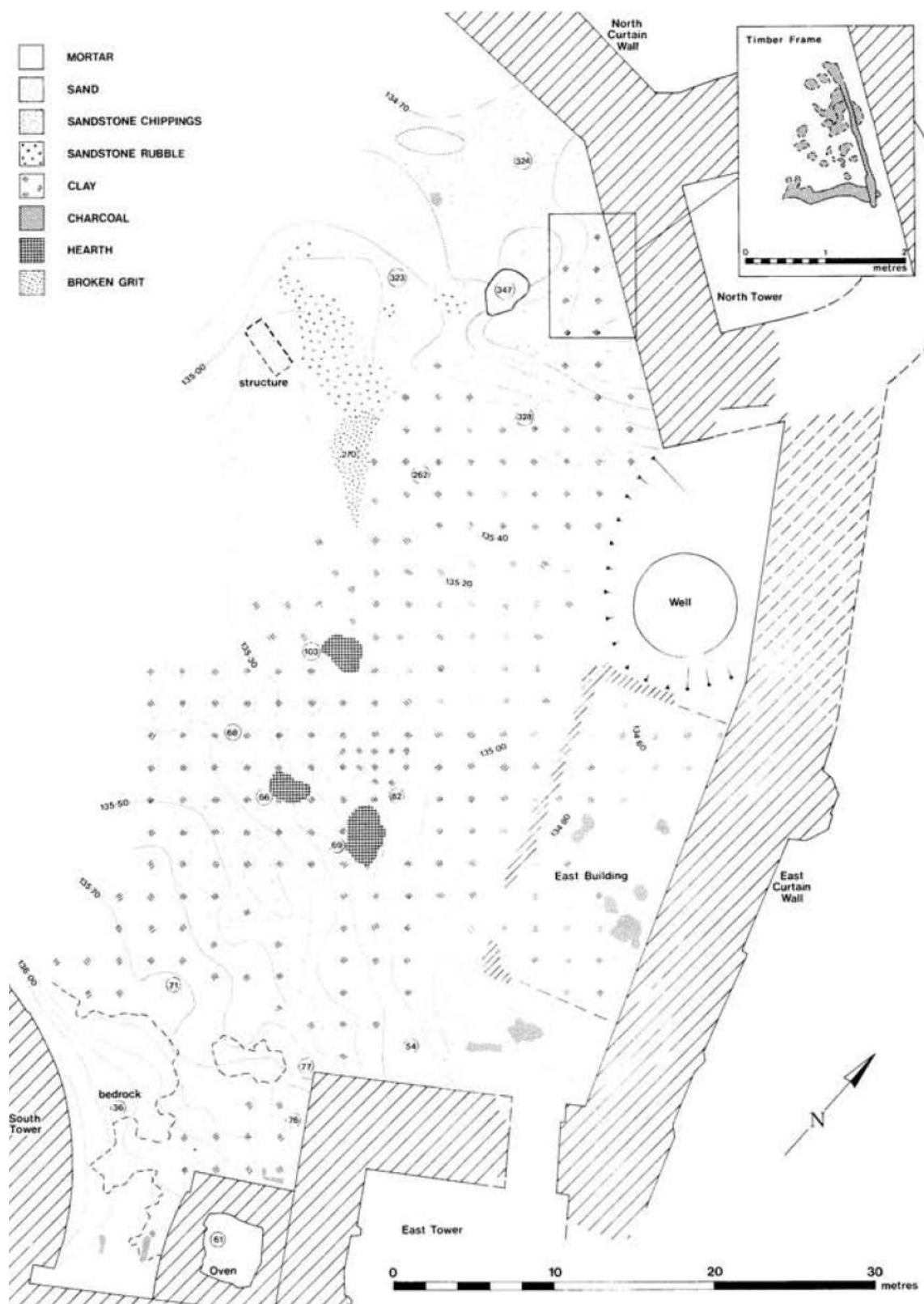


Fig. 6.3. A plan of the deposits within the inner enclosure at Caergwrle Castle. From Manley 1994, 103.

north tower, and charcoal was discovered within the building butting the east curtain wall (Manley 1994, 100–104). The fact more substantial burnt evidence was not discovered may be because the English subsequently occupied the site thereby clearing or obscuring the evidence of burning. The evidence points

toward Dafydd attempting to fire the castle as he abandoned it so that it would diminish the site's utility to the English. The castle's documented history records that it suffered accidental fire on 27<sup>th</sup> August 1283, though J. Manley (1994, 126), who led the excavation, observed that there was little evidence for this destructive event, though tentatively suggested the burnt timber frame behind the north tower could have met its demise at this point. It is more likely the English cleared away the burnt remains in preparation for repairing and reusing the site, hence why more burnt material was not found.

**Nantcribba Castle**, alternatively Gwyddgrug Castle (Montgomeryshire) was owned by Thomas Corbet and in 1263 was captured and destroyed by his nephew Gruffydd ap Gwenwynwyn as part of a feud. The only excavation on this site dates from the 18<sup>th</sup> century when antiquarian Thomas Pennant visited and remarked 'This place was probably destroyed by fire; for I have observed some melted lead, mixed with charcoal and several pieces of vitrified stuff' (Spurgeon 1962, 125, 133), though it is uncertain where exactly this was observed. Lead was used in roofs (Miller & Hatcher 1995, 59), so this suggests a structure within the interior of the enclosure castle as that is most likely where they would have been found. The use of fire within the castle points towards deliberate destruction, so it needs to be established whether this was the result of an assault or whether the site was slighted. Contemporary chroniclers mention the capture and destruction of the castle, but not a siege which points toward slighting. The antiquarian report indicates a substantial amount of burnt material, and vitrification indicates a ferocious fire where little was done to prevent the spread, again indicating slighting rather than an incidental effect of the attack.

Much has already been made of the mining at **Degannwy Castle** in relation to the donjon and the curtain walls; however, the destruction of 1263 went beyond the overtly military structures and impacted on the domestic buildings. Even here, the method of undermining was used (Alcock 1968, 192). Notably a moulded head (Fig. 6.4) that once adorned a high-status building were discovered. Based on the style of the head and the weathering, it was determined to date from the early 13<sup>th</sup> century and therefore was added when the castle was under the control of the Welsh princes. Very little else of the Welsh castle survives, so it is unclear whether this building was a hall or a chapel (Alcock 1968, 196–197). Most importantly, Alcock considered the head

did not exhibit any marks that indicate it was treated violently. Instead he postulates the head was carefully placed face-down on the floor. He concluded 'This may imply that the soldiers of Llywelyn ap Gruffydd knew that this was not a piece of hated English work, but part of the castle of Llywelyn the Great, grandfather of Llywelyn ap Gruffydd' (Alcock 1968, 197).



Fig. 6.4. Stone head of Llywelyn the Great discovered at Degannwy Castle. Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historic Monuments in Wales, 2009.

This contrasts with the treatment of a building considered to probably be a hall elsewhere on the site built under Henry III. The structure measured at least 7.3m by 30.5m, was plastered on the interior, and located in the inner enclosure. Enough survived that two finely dressed embrasures could be identified, but no such elaborate decoration as on the Welsh hall was identified (Alcock 1968, 195). This emphasises the social aspect of castle slighting: it was not merely important who owned the castle most recently, but the history of the site and the people linked to it influence how it was treated. The impression left by the archaeological record is that the work of the English was thoroughly obliterated, whereas the last remnants of the Welsh castle were treated more carefully.

Before Faulkes de Bréauté held **Bedford Castle** by permission of the king, it was held by William de Beauchamp. William had been seeking the return of Bedford Castle since Henry III replaced King John on the throne and might have expected to gain control of it after Bréauté's fall from grace (Carpenter 1990, 353). Though Henry III gave William de Beauchamp permission to maintain an unfortified structure on the site, the castle was slighted and William was unhappy not to have his castle back intact. It is unclear whether William ever used the opportunity to build an unfortified residence on this site (Baker *et al.* 1979a, 10–11). Excavations within the bailey (Area C Fig. 6.5) discovered robber trenches. In 1361 the castle was described



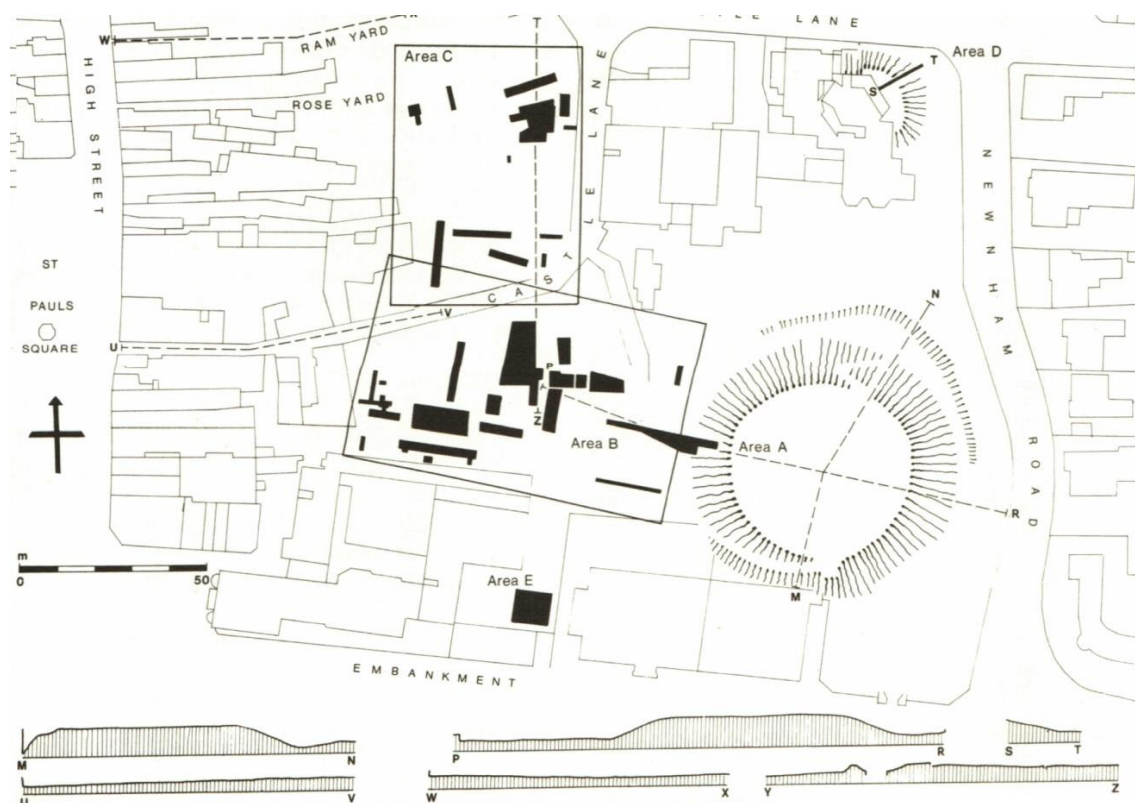


Fig. 6.5. A plan of the excavation at Bedford Castle from 1967 to 1977. Areas B and C focused on the castle's baileys. From Baker *et al.* 1979a, 9.

as 'a void plot of old enclosed by walls' (Baker *et al.* 1979a, 11, 45). While the robbing may not have immediately followed the slighting of the castle, it does not appear to have remained a high-status place and instead building materials were taken away for reuse elsewhere.

William the Marshal joined the unsuccessful rebellion against King Henry II in 1173–74 and the following year his castle at **Ludgershall** (Wiltshire) was in royal custody (Addyman & Kightly 2000, 12). This is the historical background for destruction activity discovered at Ludgershall and found to date broadly to the 12<sup>th</sup> century. Of the periods established during the excavations in the north part of the enclosure (Fig. 4.12a) the fourth period, dated c. 1154–1190, was found to contain evidence of deliberate destruction. Every structure in the excavated area except the hall was demolished (Ellis 2000a, 34). Under normal circumstances this might represent a phase of remodelling, however, given the destruction of the great tower the demolition of the other buildings within the castle takes on greater significance. If the great tower was demolished as part of Henry II's punishment of William the Marshal, it follows that the same may be applicable for the other buildings within the complex.

The clearest cases dealt with have been supported by historical evidence of either royal orders to destroy a castle, or baronial rebellion against the castle



owner. **Eynsford** (Kent) provides a perhaps unique example which does not fall within either of these groups. William Inge, a judge, purchased Eye Castle in 1307; five years later Inge officially complained that Nicholas de Criol and Alan de la Lese, claimants to the barony of Eynsford, led a party of men to his manors of Eynsford, Igtham, and Stansted and damaged them, including breaking the windows and doors (Rigold 1972, 115–116). Large-scale excavations between 1953 and 1971 discovered widespread destruction debris consisting mainly of flint rubble and tile, more emphatic than Inge's complaint indicated. Within this destruction phase, finds included large sherds of pottery (indicating rubbish or that the deposit was not cleared), door hinges, and a small amount of glass. The site was subsequently repaired but was 'shoddy and primarily a face-saving operation' (Rigold 1972, 130–31). Most of the sites in this chapter are situations in which one person of high-status asserts their authority over another person of high-status, such as a king exercising power over a vassal's property. Destruction could also be a tool for people of low-status to subvert the social order and temporarily diminish a magnate's authority. Such is the case at Eynsford, though it is an uncommon situation. The archaeological record is similar to other sites, with rubble, tile, and rubbish indicating destruction. It is interesting to note that they did not burn the castle which is a relatively easy method of slighting. The social role of destruction will be examined in greater detail in Chapter 6 with particular reference to the Peasants' Revolt.

At **Radcot**, a building identified as a chapel was found to have been dismantled in the 12<sup>th</sup> century. The great tower and gatehouse were also dismantled around the same time. Within the chapel was a mortar dump, as seen with the gatehouse and great tower, indicating that reusable stone had been cleaned and removed from the site. This layer contained 11<sup>th</sup>- and 12<sup>th</sup>-century pottery (Wessex Archaeology 2009, 10). The fact that it was so extensive, encompassing multiple elements of the castle complex, means this should be interpreted as slighting. The destruction of the great tower, gatehouse, and chapel is too great to have been caused by an assault.

Excavations at **Great Torrington** (Devon) have been partial, but as discussed above have discovered evidence that the rampart was levelled. The site was first excavated in 1987 and then only across a small area in advance of the construction of a pavilion. A large amount of rubble from shale-built

structures was discovered, but no datable evidence was recovered from these contexts. A trench elsewhere on the site recovered sherds of Devon unglazed hand-made coarseware, but this cannot be more closely dated than the 13<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> centuries (Higham & Goddard 1987, 100–102). The excavators did not link the rubble layer with Henry III's order to demolish the castle in 1228. However, the evidence of a levelled rampart from earlier excavation – which proved difficult to date – would point towards a major destructive event. The most likely scenario is that both destruction deposits relate to Great Torrington's slighting in 1228.

**Mountsorrel** (Leicestershire) escaped 'the Anarchy' and the rebellion of 1173–4 apparently intact, but in 1217 Henry III ordered the castle's demolition (Cantor 1977–78, 37). Trial-trenching across the motte in 1952 (Fig. 6.7) corroborated this event, noting that 'the soil on the hill is covering a considerable deposit of rubble, building material – granite, tiles, pottery sherds & nails' (Ardron 1981; Creighton 1997, 34). The absence of later pottery indicates the site went out of use after this period. The excavation was not detailed however, and further archaeological investigation could be informative. Topographical and geophysical surveys in the 2010s provided further information on the layout of the castle (Fig. 6.6) and suggested that some structures may have been completely robbed out (Trick, Wright & Creighton 2016, 112–115), but do not illuminate the castle's slighting in 1217. As the authors of the survey note, the site is a good candidate for further fieldwork, and excavation may reveal more information on how the castle was treated.

**Weoley Castle** (Warwickshire) was likely built in the 1260s by Roger de Somery. Excavations between 1955 and 1960 examined sections of the moat, the western tower, and the north-east and east areas inside the castle. A trench on the west side of the site examined the curtain wall and part of the enclosure (area D, Fig. 6.8). A layer 0.2m–0.3m thick completely covered this area. It consisted of sandstone rubble and contained finely worked architectural elements such as a pinnacle. This period of destruction was dated to 1320–1380, based on pottery evidence and the discovery of dateable glass and tiles. The building in this area was possibly a barn or stable (Oswald 1962, 61–64). The excavator suggested the damage could have been a result of a remodelling of the site due to a change in ownership or may have been linked to political unrest during the reign of Edward II (Oswald 1962). However, as with Radcot



Fig. 6.6. Plan of Mountsorrel Castle. From Trick, Wright & Creighton 2016, 113.



Castle the extent of the destruction across the site points towards slighting. As will be discussed below, the gate tower was thrown into the moat, probably in the first half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, broadly coinciding with the destruction of the barn or stable (Oswald 1962, 64). The collapse of the tower into the moat does not suggest remodelling, but rather a more destructive event. If remodelling had been the intention it is likely that more care would have been used to retrieve reusable material. Moreover, the fact that a large area was effected by the destruction is more than likely to have been incurred by an assault. The conclusion of this thesis is that Weoley Castle was slighted in the 14<sup>th</sup> century.

### 6.1.1 Discussion

For the likes of Bedford and Dudley we are fortunate to have historical references recording the king's order to slight a castle. In these cases, it is clearly a form of punishment. If we abstract the archaeological evidence from the documentary evidence, it becomes less easy to distinguish slighting from other events. This is the situation we are in for many of the sites considered here. Intriguingly there is a clear divide geographical when it comes to the

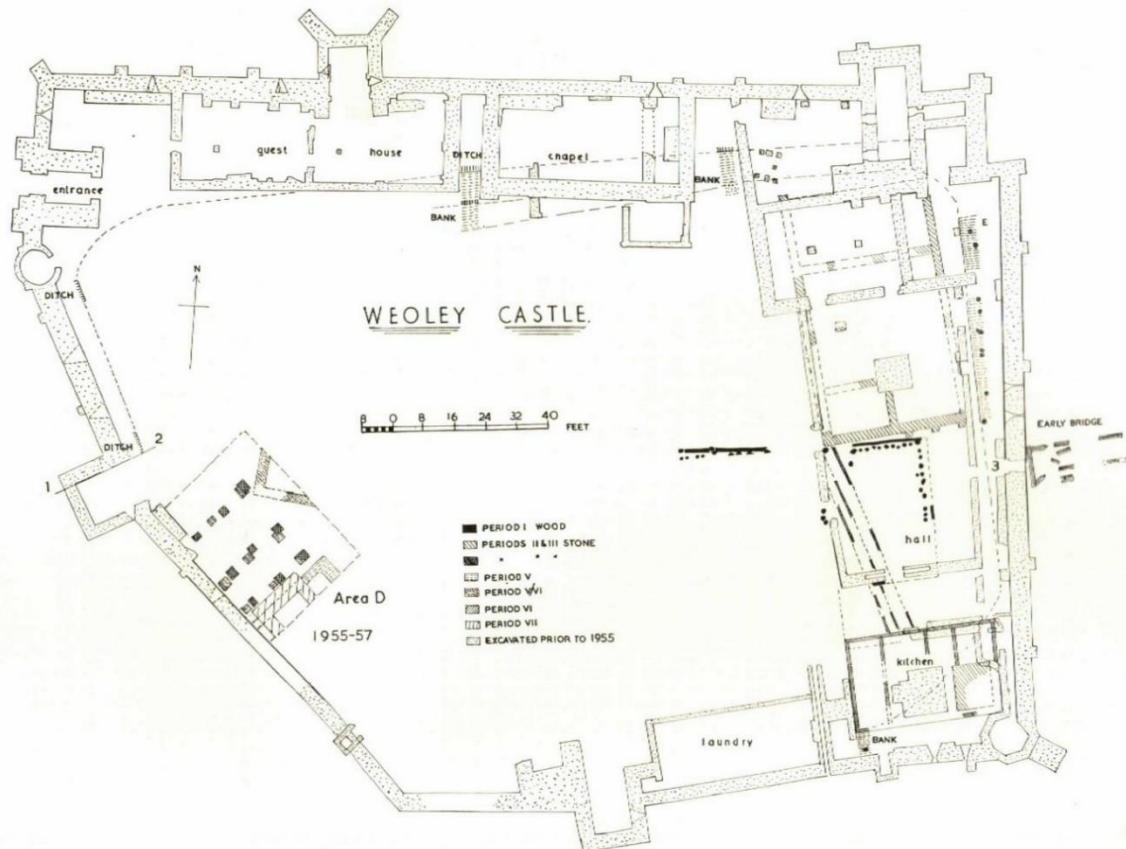


Fig. 6.8. A plan of the excavations at Weoley Castle. From Oswald 1962, 62.

archaeology of destruction, with Welsh sites (and the one Scottish site) more commonly displaying signs of burning. This is likely to be due to one of two considerations, or perhaps a combination: in the cases from England the tendency to avoid the use of fire would maximise the amount of reusable building material and may reflect easier access to skilled labour to carry out the dismantling with picks. Nantcribba was destroyed as part of a family feud while Nevern, Dyserth, Caergwrle, and Dryslwn were all slighted as part of Anglo-Welsh warfare. The context for the destruction of Pennard is unclear, but warfare between two countries meant that fire was a commonly used destructive method. Furthermore, in not a single case have excavators identified a kitchen building or a hearth which might indicate the fire was domestic.

Often there is simply not enough evidence to be sure of the factors leading up to an event. The case of Weoley Castle encapsulates this problem. There is clear evidence of destruction, and a chronological framework within which the event can be placed. Unfortunately, it is not possible to deduce the reasons for the slighting, only that it took place. In this particular case it was necessary to look beyond a single trench and seek evidence elsewhere on the site. Similarly, ploughing in the bailey of Wolfscastle (Pembrokeshire) resulted in the discovery of burnt stone (Murcott 1985, 44). It is not clear whether this may have amounted to industrial activity – perhaps a furnace – or was the signature of violent end to the history of the site. Without further archaeological excavation to identify the nature of this burnt material it would be unwise to include it as a key piece of evidence. While the castle has been mutilated, this has been attributed to 19<sup>th</sup> century activity rather than the medieval period (Murcott 1985, 44, 46).

The case of Loughor Castle (Glamorgan) illustrates the potential pitfalls in attempting to equate events in the archaeological record with those for which we have documentary evidence. The *Brut y Tywysogion* records the castle was captured by the Welsh and burned in 1151. It was again captured by the Welsh in 1215 although burning was not mentioned. Therefore, when a burnt layer was found during excavation in 1969 the excavator suggested it was evidence of the 1151 destruction (Lewis 1973, 61). Subsequent excavations showed the burning post-dated the construction of the 13<sup>th</sup>-century curtain wall, leading to a reinterpretation of the evidence (Lewis 1974, 152; Lewis 1993, 120–122). While



this might not exclude Loughor as a site that was slighted it is ambiguous. Unburnt pottery was found on top of the burning layer, as well as strips of bronze. This led Lewis (1993, 114–115) to suggest either the layer of burnt material had been left uncovered while the site continued in use – which, as he points out, was highly unlikely – or that this represented a ransacking of the castle after it had been captured. This interpretation would indicate the fire was primarily part of the attack; if it had taken place after the siege, it would be expected that the castle was sacked beforehand. It is yet possible the local populace visited the castle and left the deposits of rubbish, but this seems less likely than the attackers being responsible.

An interesting aspect is that so few halls and chapels appear to have been deliberately destroyed. So few were included in castle slighting that it can only have been a conscious decision. Castle chapels were sometimes exempt from the jurisdiction of the church, especially those in royal castles though there are some baronial examples; some of these structures served the local parish and therefore were important beyond being part of the castle (Denton 1970, 127–128; Wheatley 2004, 90–91). In many cases, the chaplain was accountable to the church. Regardless of whether the castle chapel was independent, it is likely that anyone carrying out slighting would have been reluctant to destroy a religious building for fear of spiritual repercussions. No doubt there is some undercounting taking place at the very least in the case of great halls; the use of particular structures within a castle can sometimes be a matter of conjecture and in the case of great towers or mural towers which were demolished there is a possibility that some hosted a hall or chapel, possibly both. However, what appears to have happened is a deliberate aversion to damaging these categories of building when they are not integrated with the military architecture. As chapels could serve the local community, so too could great halls through administrative activities. When Bedford's gaol was destroyed along with the castle in 1224 it had to be rebuilt as an important tool of local governance; it is likely that while great halls were socially important for gatherings their role as administrative centres helped shield them from slighting. While the number of examples is small, meaning any conclusions are equivocal, it is worth noting the four sites where excavation has identified that great halls were slighted all occur in Wales. This indicates a regional idiosyncrasy between the ways castles were treated. It may be the great hall had greater social

significance in Welsh culture than in English. Indeed, there are cases such as Leicester and Ludgershall in which the great hall continued to stand when the castle around it was deliberately demolished.

Examining the areas behind the defences is one of this study's crucial contributions. The archaeological evidence demonstrates that slighting was emphatically not restricted to the overtly militarised aspects of the structure, when a castle was slighted it was in fact probable the areas within the site – including workshops, domestic quarters, and accommodation – were targeted for destruction. It contributes to our understanding of the castle as a complex construction at the heart of medieval society.

## **6.2 The castle as a unit – discussion and summary**

There are concentrations of slighted castles in southern and central England, northern Wales, and southern and eastern Scotland. Northern England and south-east Wales have comparatively few examples. The English sides of the Anglo-Scottish and Anglo-Welsh borders have relatively few examples and there are two contributing factors. First, when slighting was used within a country as a tool to suppress a rebellion, damaging frontier fortresses would undermine the security of the state. Secondly, the transient warfare in these regions meant that while demolishing an opponent's fortifications might be appealing, there may not have been either the time or resources to do so. This may explain why fire was used to slight castles in 30 cases, and why 18 of these were located in Scotland, Wales, or their respective marches with examples from the 12<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> centuries (Fig. 6.9b). Picking and digging as methods of slighting were most common in England and especially in the 12<sup>th</sup> century (Fig. 6.9c and Fig. 6.9d). Mining was less common, with evidence of this activity found at just five sites (Fig. 6.9e). This is no doubt partly because evidence of mining is less likely to survive as the tunnel usually collapsed; as a result this method may be significantly under-represented in the archaeological record. Instances where the tunnel survives are rare, though in some cases burnt timber props remain, showing where a mine may have been. Building material which could be reused was often removed from a site, and this may explain why mining was an uncommon form of slighting. The collapse of a wall by mining would bury dressed stone at the base under rubble, and increased the likelihood that ashlar from higher up the wall would be damaged when



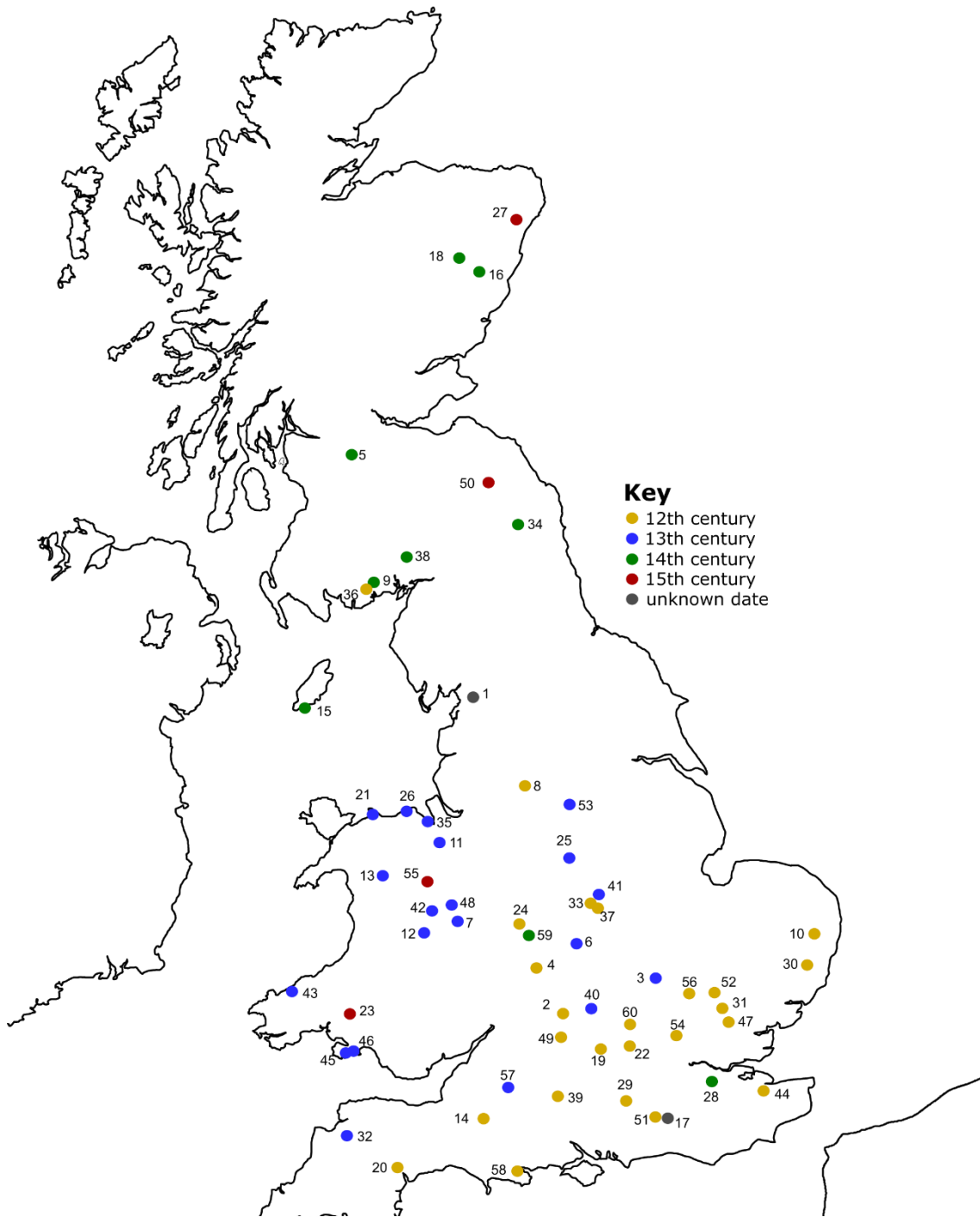


Fig. 6.9a. A distribution map of the sites mentioned in Chapters 4 to 6.

- |                        |                  |                       |                            |
|------------------------|------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. Arkholme            | 2. Ascot d'Oilly | 3. Bedford            | 4. Botelers Castle         |
| 5. Bothwell            | 6. Brandon       | 7. Brockhurst         | 8. Buckton                 |
| 9. Buittle             | 10. Bungay       | 11. Caergwrle         | 12. Castell Bryn Amlwg     |
| 13. Castell Carndochan | 14. Castle Cary  | 15. Castle Rushen     | 16. Castlehill of Strachan |
| 17. Channelsbrook      | 18. Coull        | 19. Crowmarsh Gifford | 20. Danes Castle           |
| 21. Degannwy           | 22. Desborough   | 23. Dryslwyn          | 24. Dudley                 |
| 25. Duffield           | 26. Dyserth      | 27. Esslemont         | 28. Eynsford               |
| 29. Farnham            | 30. Framlingham  | 31. Great Easton      | 32. Great Torrington       |
| 33. Groby              | 34. Harbottle    | 35. Hen Blas          | 36. Ingleston Motte        |
| 37. Leicester          | 38. Lochmaben    | 39. Ludgershall       | 40. Middleton Stoney       |
| 41. Mountsorrel        | 42. Nantcribba   | 43. Nevern            | 44. Newnham                |
| 45. Penmaen            | 46. Nantcribba   | 47. Pleshey           | 48. Pontesbury             |
| 49. Radcot             | 50. Roxburgh     | 51. Rudgwick          | 52. Saffron Walden         |
| 53. Sheffield          | 54. South Mimms  | 55. Sycharth          | 56. Therfield              |
| 57. Trowbridge         | 58. Wareham      | 59. Weoley            | 60. Weston Turville        |

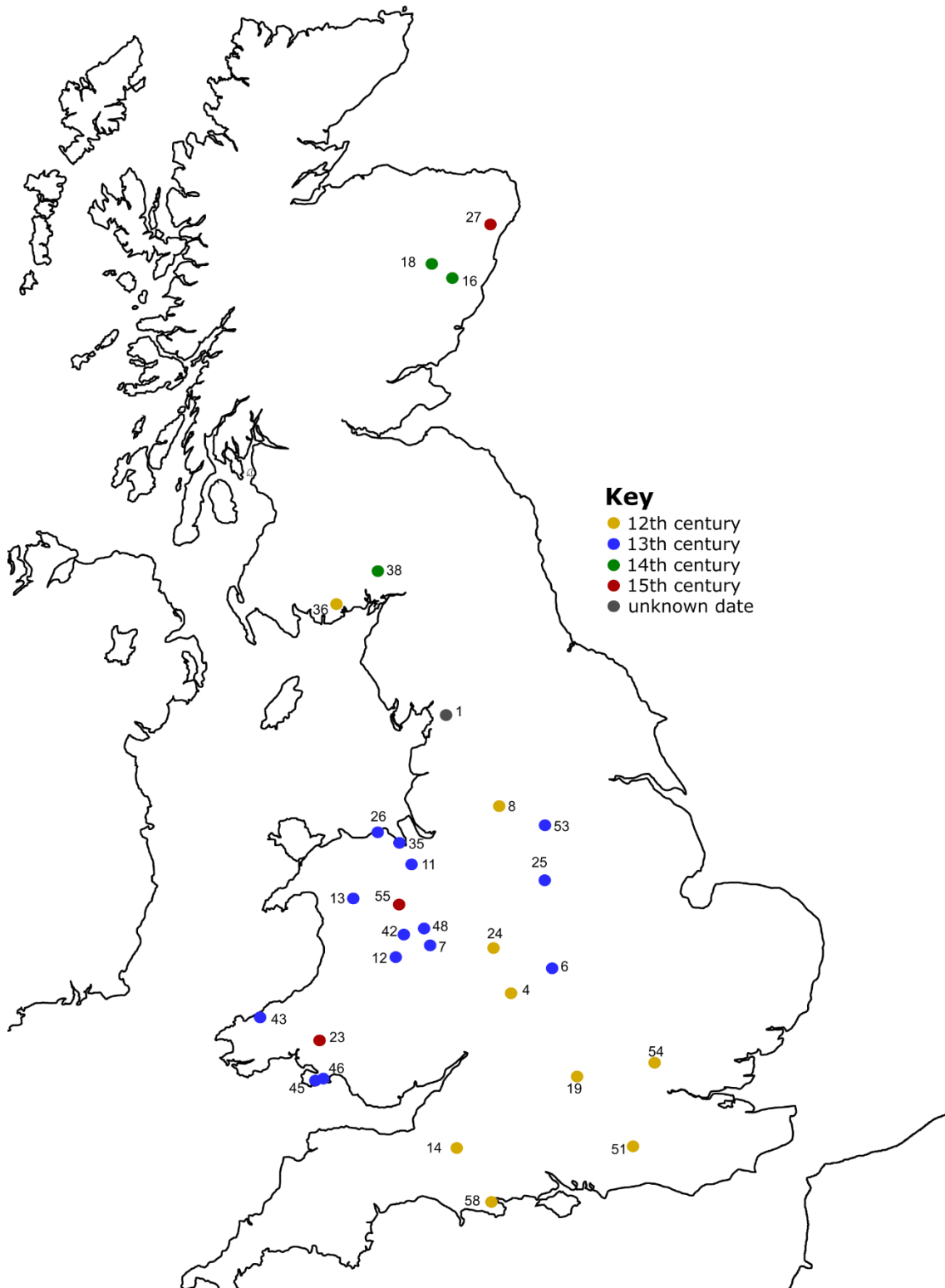


Fig. 6.9b. A distribution map of sites where the archaeological evidence indicates burning was used as a method of slighting.

- |                 |                            |                        |                        |
|-----------------|----------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Arkholme     | 4. Botelers Castle         | 6. Brandon             | 7. Brockhurst          |
| 8. Buckton      | 11. Caergwrle              | 12. Castell Bryn Amlwg | 13. Castell Carndochan |
| 14. Castle Cary | 16. Castlehill of Strachan | 18. Coull              | 19. Crowmarsh Gifford  |
| 23. Dryslwyn    | 24. Dudley                 | 25. Duffield           | 26. Dyserth            |
| 27. Esslemont   | 35. Hen Blas               | 36. Ingleston Motte    | 38. Lochmaben          |
| 42. Nantcribba  | 43. Nevern                 | 45. Penmaen            | 46. Pennard            |
| 48. Pontesbury  | 51. Rudgwick               | 53. Sheffield          | 54. South Mimms        |
| 55. Sycharth    | 58. Wareham                |                        |                        |

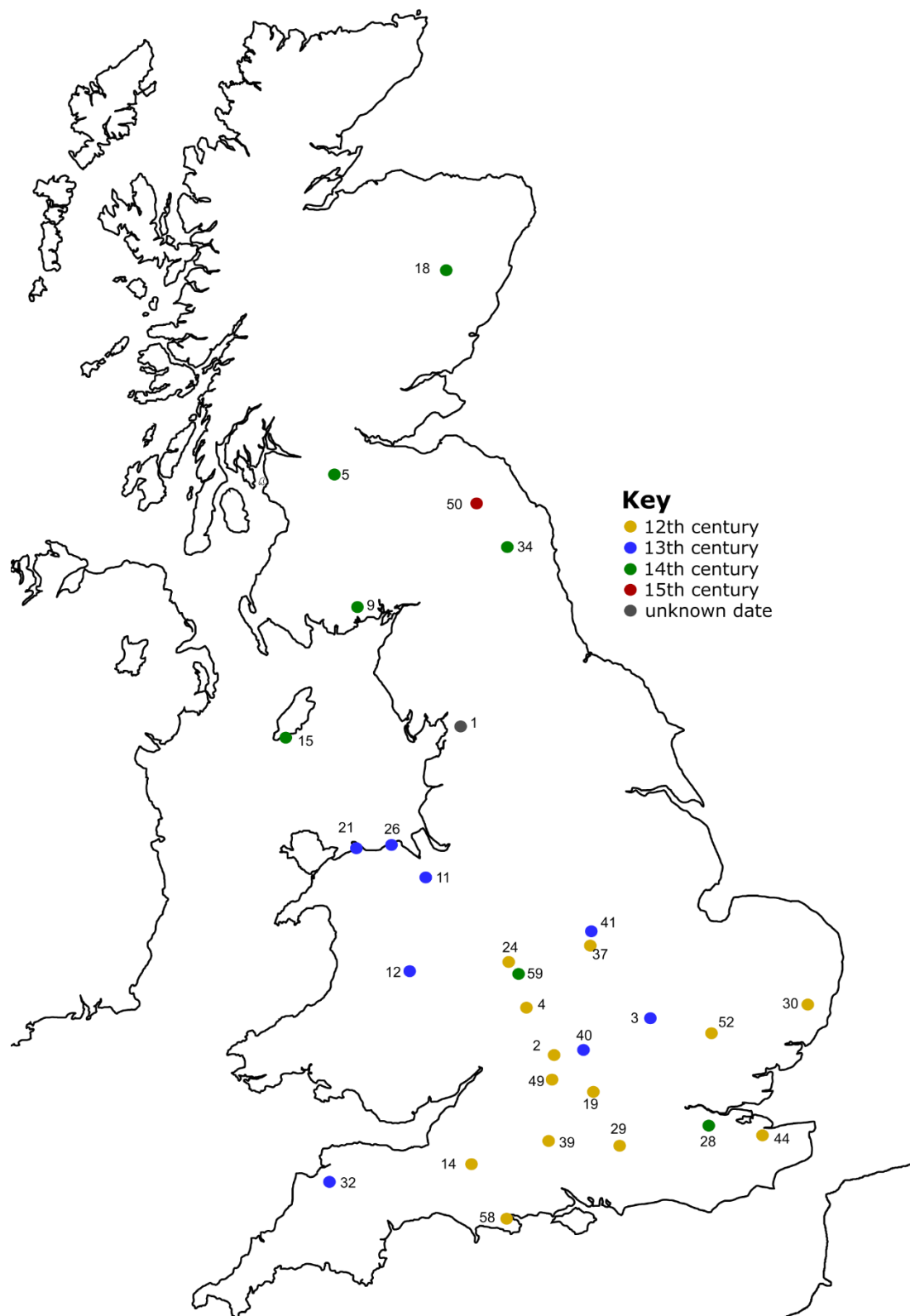


Fig. 6.9c. A distribution map of sites where the archaeological evidence indicates picking was used as a method of slighting.

- |                 |                   |                      |                        |
|-----------------|-------------------|----------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Arkholme     | 2. Ascot d'Oilly  | 3. Bedford           | 4. Botelers Castle     |
| 5. Bothwell     | 9. Buittle        | 11. Caergwrle        | 12. Castell Bryn Amlwg |
| 14. Castle Cary | 15. Castle Rushen | 18. Coull            | 19. Crowmarsh Gifford  |
| 21. Degannwy    | 24. Dudley        | 26. Dyserth          | 28. Eynsford           |
| 29. Farnham     | 30. Framlingham   | 32. Great Torrington | 34. Harbottle          |
| 37. Leicester   | 39. Ludgershall   | 40. Middleton Stoney | 41. Mountsorrel        |
| 44. Newnham     | 49. Radcot        | 50. Roxburgh         | 52. Saffron Walden     |
| 58. Wareham     | 59. Weoley        |                      |                        |

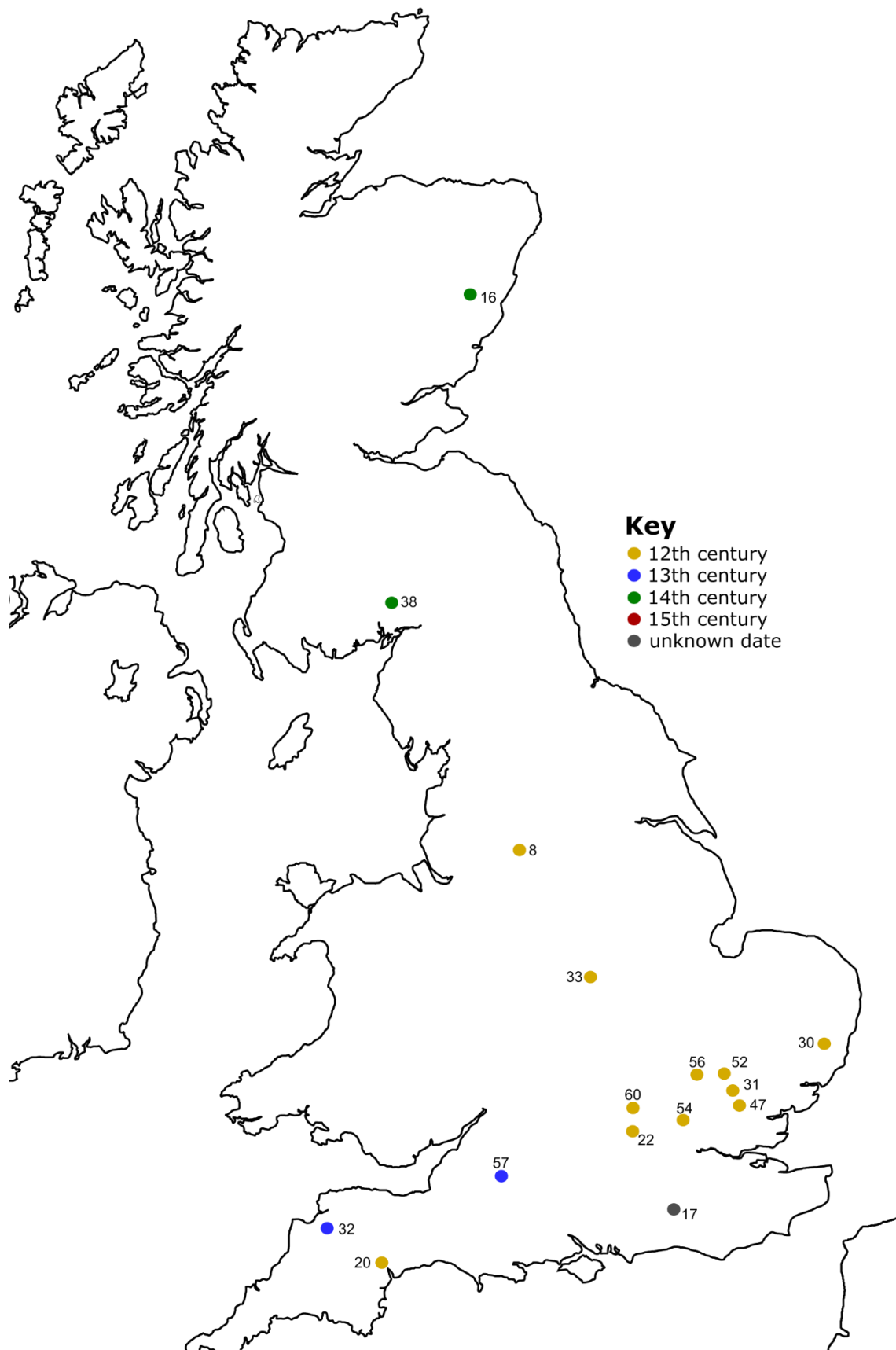


Fig. 6.9d. A distribution map of sites where the archaeological evidence indicates earthworks were dug away.

- |                 |                            |                    |                      |
|-----------------|----------------------------|--------------------|----------------------|
| 8. Buckton      | 16. Castlehill of Strachan | 17. Channellsbrook | 20. Danes Castle     |
| 22. Desborough  | 30. Framlingham            | 31. Great Easton   | 32. Great Torrington |
| 33. Groby       | 38. Lochmaben              | 47. Pleshey        | 52. Saffron Walden   |
| 54. South Mimms | 56. Therfield              | 57. Trowbridge     | 60. Weston Turville  |

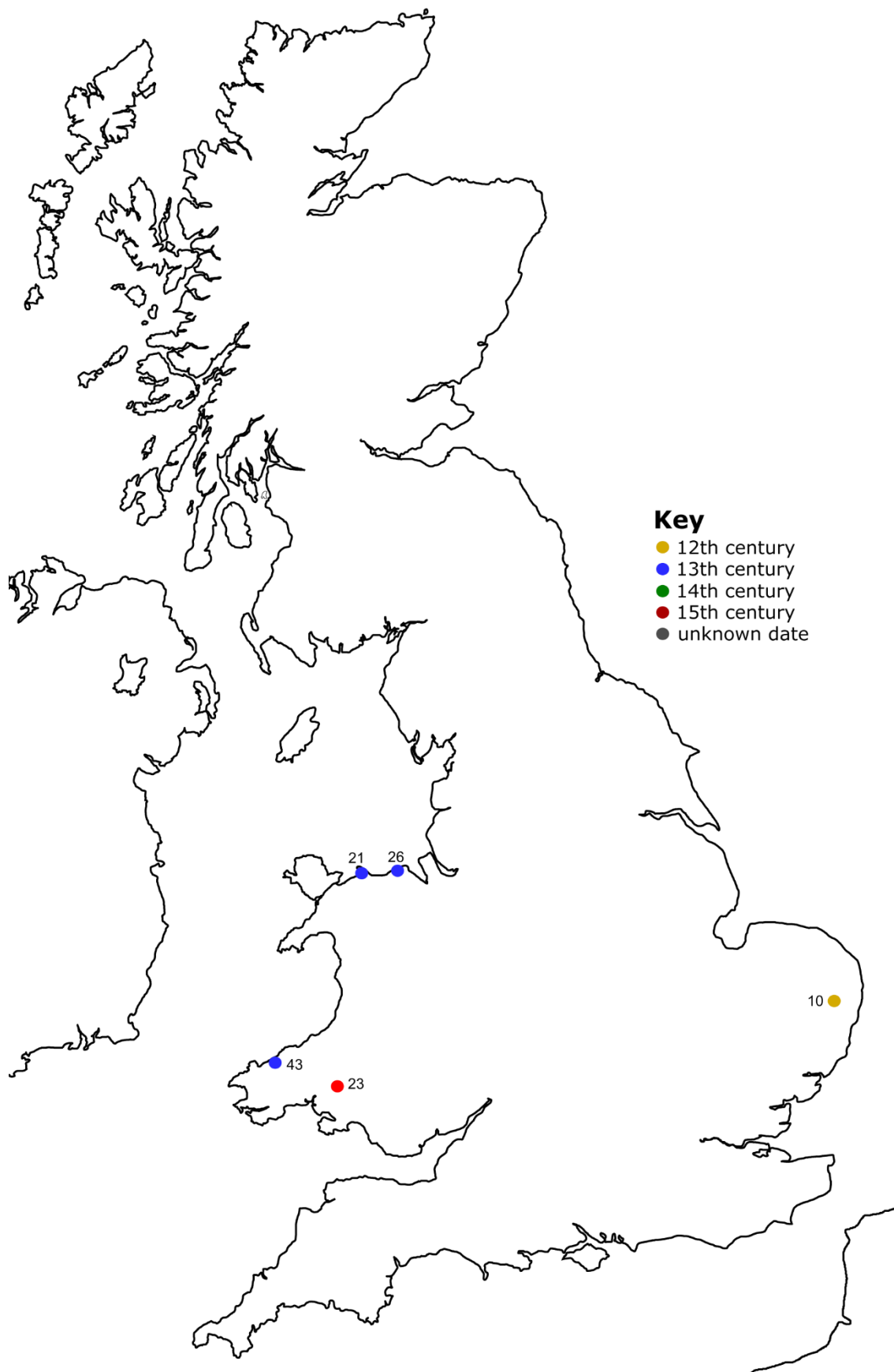


Fig. 6.9e. A distribution map of sites where the archaeological evidence indicates mining was used as a method of slighting.

10. Bungay  
43. Nevern

21. Degannwy

23. Dryslwyn

26. Dyserth

hitting the ground. Removing stone for reuse required careful handling and mining was the antithesis of this approach. As a very destructive technique the emphasis was on the damage caused in the act of slighting. At Bungay the owner rebelled against the king in 1173, at Nevern the tower was undermined to prevent it from being used by the English in 1195, at Degannwy the Welsh destroyed a castle appropriated by the English in 1263, and at Dryslwyn the castle was one of the final strongholds of a Welsh rebellion against English rule, lasting until 1407. In each situation the slighting was linked to strong emotions of identity mixed with politics.

Dating evidence is available for 56 sites, meaning that a broad chronology can be established. Slighting was most common in the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries, with a smaller number of cases in the following two centuries. The distribution map shows slighting in the 12<sup>th</sup> century was most common in southern England, while in the 13<sup>th</sup> century it was most common in Wales and central England. Cases from the 14<sup>th</sup> century are generally restricted to Scotland and are associated with the Anglo-Scottish wars. For England the chronological distribution of slighting broadly correlates with that of sieges. The following data on 'actions' is derived from Foard and Morris (2012, 38–39) and sieges from Liddiard (2005, 72). Of the 444 sieges in England between 1066 and 1500, 67% took place in the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries, while out of the 39 datable slightings in the country over the same period 92% date from these two centuries (Chart 6.1). Sieges as opposed to battles were the dominant form of warfare so even while the 50 sieges in England during the 15<sup>th</sup> century was a 61% decrease from the 13<sup>th</sup> century, it still surpassed the 18 'actions' or battles in the country.

Castles played an important role in medieval warfare, so it is to be expected that their military function was a concern when the decision was taken to slight. A flaw in earlier understandings of slighting has been an overriding emphasis on the use of castles as a military base (as discussed in Chapter 1.5). Castles themselves had a range of purposes, and their role as fortifications was linked to their social significance. The correlation between sieges and slighting makes it clear that castle slighting was a feature of medieval warfare. Damaging a castle diminished its military value, both in terms of making it more difficult to defend and eroding the significance of the military architecture and the importance to the owner's identity and prestige. Like

castles themselves, slighting was a convergence of purposes and meanings. Importantly it was typically directed at an individual, the person who was perceived as the owner of the building. The link to siege warfare indicates that the castle's. The intention does not appear to have been to disrupt local administration, otherwise slighting would likely not have decreased in parallel with siege warfare. Indeed, in the case of Leicester the great hall was left intact allowing the castle to still function administratively while its military features had been deliberately stripped away. And at Bedford the construction of gaol after the castle was slighted suggests that the court had been disrupted by the destruction of the castle and the situation needed intervention from the monarch. Bedford is an exceptional case as its resistance was an affront to the young king's burgeoning rule, and it is striking that it was more usual for the structures of local rule were left intact.

Noticeably as siege warfare became less common the number of slights also fell and the number of battles increased. Foard and Morris do not have data for 'actions' in Wales, while Liddiard does not have data for sieges in Scotland, making similar comparisons difficult. With only nine instances of slighting identified for Wales, any correlation should be treated carefully as small samples are more likely to be skewed, however the correlation with siege warfare seen in England is evident (Chart 6.2). With Scotland there are again only eight instances of slighting, so similar caveats apply, but there seems to be a positive correlation between slighting and battles (Chart 6.3). While data on sieges is lacking, this is the inverse of the trend seen in the data for England, perhaps indicating the different nature of warfare in the two countries. Most likely it is related to the Scottish Wars of Independence and partly linked to Robert Bruce's tactic of slighting his own castles because siege warfare was not his strength.

As noted in Chapter 3.2, stone castles as opposed to timber structures required a greater investment of time and money to build. This building material also effected the amount of effort involved in slighting a castle, so again a stone structure would be harder to slight. There is no doubt that timber castles were socially important, for example Owain Glendower's castle at Sycharth in the early 15th century was still timber but written about in glowing terms by a contemporary poet. However, the combination of greater investment in stone structures and the greater difficulty in slighting them makes their destruction

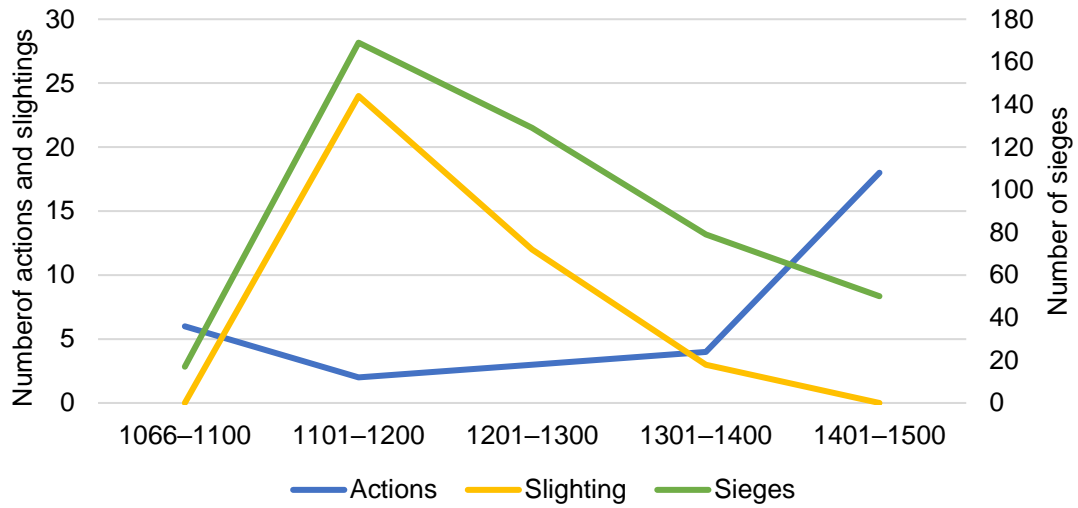


Chart 6.1. Number of sieges, actions, and slights per century in England. Data for sieges from Liddiard 2005, 72. Data for actions from Foard & Morris 2012, 38–39.

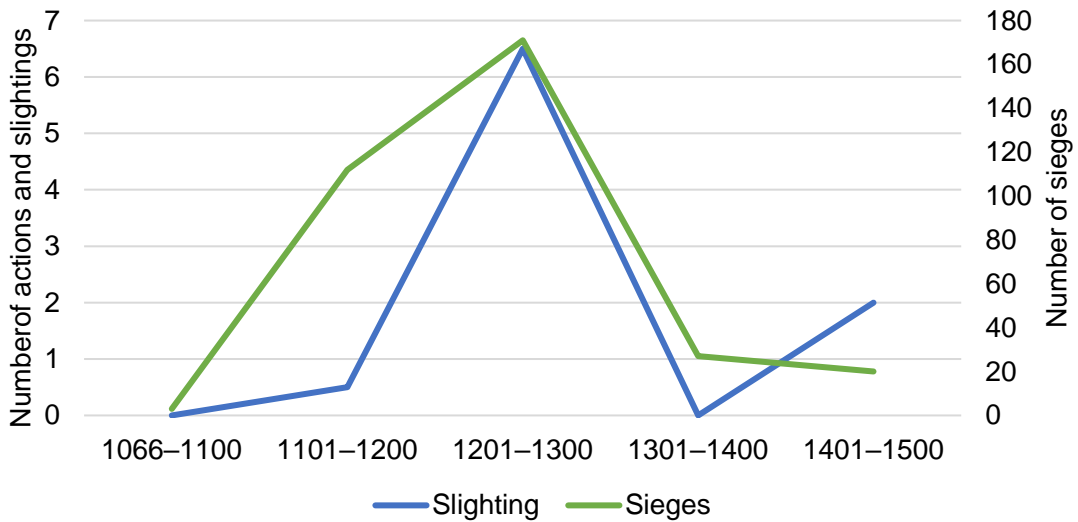


Chart 6.2. Number of sieges and slights per century in Wales. Data for sieges from Liddiard 2005, 72.

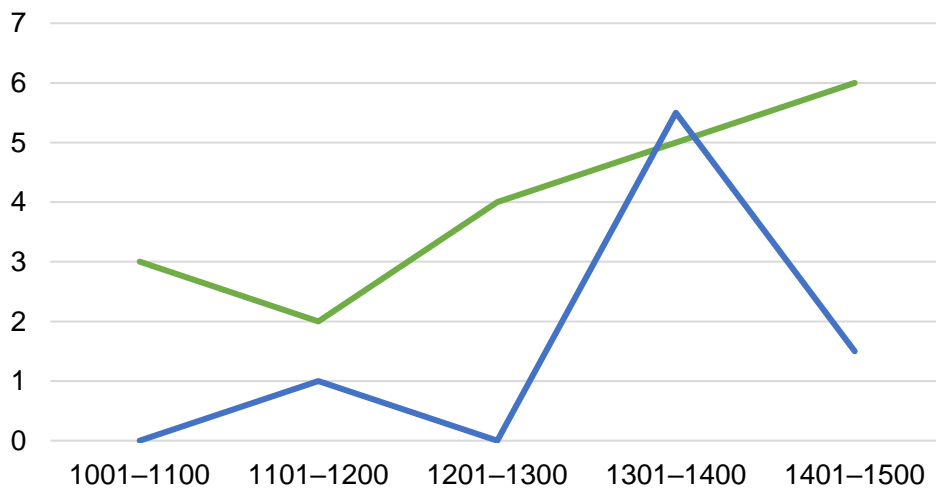


Chart 6.3. Number of actions and slights per century in Scotland. Data for actions from Foard & Morris 2012, 38–39.



more significant than timber structures. As such it is interesting that of the 56 slighted sites where we know the main building material (Appendix 1), more than two thirds (39) were stone. In part this reflects the importance of stone castles in this period, as most of the cases of slighting date from the 12<sup>th</sup> or 13<sup>th</sup> centuries by which point it was common to build in stone. However, it does reinforce the importance of removing the military value of these buildings. These were structures which not only were important in warfare but conveyed strength to the viewer. Slighting a stone case was a vicious attack at the owner's ability to protect themselves and their property, their status, and their prestige.

Having treated each element of the castle as a coherent group, it now remains to consider the castle as a whole. While one area of destruction may indicate collapse due to poor workmanship, in the cases where destruction is more widespread another reason demands to be considered. So far this chapter has focused on the archaeology of destruction, but just as important as the areas which were deliberately damaged are those which were left untouched. By first excluding those sites where the excavations were focussed on a particular feature of the castle rather than a wider area, or were surveyed rather than destruction encompassing multiple areas. In 1263 Degannwy was slighted by Llywelyn ap Gruffydd so thoroughly that the excavator was shocked at the effort which had gone into the act. In the cases of Bedford (1224) and Leicester (1173) magnates who had opposed royal authority were dealt with in the harshest way possible short of executing the men responsible. The prevailing social situation at the time meant this was not an option, and in the case of Bedford the man responsible fled the country. When destruction is all encompassing it progressed beyond the realm of military expediency and became primarily a means of expressing power.

Perhaps the most interesting pattern not yet highlighted is how halls could on occasion be spared when the rest of the castle was violently treated. At Leicester Castle for example, dendrochronology has revealed the great hall that still stands – albeit very much remodelled and adapted in later centuries – pre-dated the destruction of the 1170s (Alcock & Buckley 1987, 73–74). While the timbers could have been reused, the most likely conclusion is that the hall was left standing while the rest of the castle was slighted. Similarly, when Ludgershall was demolished, of the internal buildings only the hall was spared

destruction (Ellis 2000a, 34). Why should this be the case? To leave these high-status structures might seem an unusual act when the owner's status was being attacked, as was particularly the case at Leicester. Perhaps the answer lies in what differentiates a castle from other high-status dwellings: the fortifications. In theory the Earl of Leicester could have still held court at Leicester, but would have been surrounded by visible reminders of his choice to oppose the king. The earl was no longer allowed to possess a castle. His great hall was allowed to stand – essential for administration through various courts, and therefore emphasising the importance of large castles as centres of government. However, the fortified elements which marked him not just as the social elite but as a man of strength were stripped away, revealing his vulnerability. Situations where slighting could take place were outlined in the methodology preceding this chapter. While it has been possible to differentiate slighting from other forms of destruction, attributing these events to one of three circumstances adds a further layer of complexity. Instances where an owner was ordered to demolish their property because they had not been given permission to build are especially difficult to identify. In part this is because the demolition may not have been complete and would likely have been restricted to the newest part of the castle. To add to this, such situations were rare. At Coull Castle, W.D. Simpson (1924, 93) observed 'It is highly significant that the domestic range shows no trace of such breaching, and its condition to-day seems to be the natural result of gradual decay'. For Simpson the significance is self-evident: targeting the military structures rendered the castle *defenceless*. He suggested the activity was undertaken by Robert Bruce to prevent the English from using the castle, which would explain the strong military aspect to the interpretation. As this thesis demonstrates, slighting was typically not a simple matter of military determinism. Issues of power, status, control, and identity are all factors when deciding to demolish a castle and how. There are cases of pre-emptive slighting but even in these the treatment of the building is significant. Coull and Bothwell are interesting as in both cases one half of their donjons were demolished, that facing outwards from the castle. In this different social context, the highly visible nature of this defacement is highly significant as it was important not just to leave the castle useless as a fortification but to show publicly that it had been done. The insubstantial nature of the repairs shows a desire to preserve this aspect of the castle's history, perhaps as a

reminder of the changes of ownership and the war with the English. Even when a military motive may be easily arrived at there are undoubtedly social aspects to be considered, as demonstrated by the fact medieval warfare was ritualised. In warfare the unfurling of banners and donning of helmets signalled immediate intent to do battle, and removing the helmet signalled the battle was over (Jones 2010, 116–117).

Destruction existed along a spectrum and the clear implication is that when contemporary sources state a castle was demolished or destroyed they should not be taken at face value. Instead it would be useful to ascertain which areas were targeted. At Weoley Castle, destruction deposits in the moat and in part of the interior of the enclosure led the excavator to conclude that the entire site had been demolished (Oswald 1962, 70). However, while the defences were targeted, there is information lacking on the interior. Were the domestic structures left standing amidst the rubble, or were they too pulled to the ground? Instances of complete destruction are uncommon, reserved for those who most grievously transgressed. It should not be taken for granted that even destruction in multiple areas means the whole site was levelled.

The chapter has mentioned the activities of Robert Bruce and his supporters in relation to the castles of Bothwell (Lanarkshire), Coull (Aberdeenshire), Castlehill of Strachan (Kincardineshire), Buittle (Dumfries and Galloway), Harbottle (Northumberland), and possibly Castle Rushen (Isle of Man). The four sites in Scotland account for half of the eight from that country examined in this thesis. Bruce therefore plays an important role in the archaeology of castles in Scotland, but the documentary evidence would suggest he had an even greater impact. During the Anglo-Scottish Wars Robert Bruce established a reputation for destroying castles and the chronicler Sir Thomas Gray, writing several decades after Bruce's campaign, recounted 'Robert Bruce had all the castles of Scotland demolished, except Dumbarton' (quoted in Cornell 2008, 234). The 15<sup>th</sup>-century chronicler Walter Bower, author of the *Scotichronicon*, asserted that Bruce destroyed 137 towns or castles (quoted in Cornell 2008, 234–235).

While the documentary sources present an exaggerated and simplistic picture, it is clear the archaeological evidence is incomplete and biased away from Scotland due to lack of sufficient fieldwork. None of the castles at Ayr (Ayrshire) (RCAHMS 2016), Inverness (Inverness-shire) (RCAHMS 2016),

Forfar (Angus) (Angus HER 2013), and Perth (Perthshire) (RCAHMS 2016) have been excavated. As previously discussed at Roxburgh the surface has barely been scratched and so it is unsurprising that evidence of Bruce's activity is lacking. For details of the slighting of Edinburgh and Stirling we have to rely primarily on the written evidence. The first in-depth archaeological investigation at Edinburgh Castle took place in 1989 and while subsequent watching briefs and small-scale studies have added to our understanding of the castle, they discovered little evidence relating to Robert Bruce's slighting (Driscoll & Yeoman 1997). There is a similar situation at Stirling. According to Walter Bower Roxburgh's 'tower, castle and donjon' were demolished (quoted in Cornell 2008, 250), while documentary sources indicate the great tower at Edinburgh was undermined, and Stirling completely razed to the ground. This is not to cast doubt on whether these sites were slighted, but to point out that the evidence we have is substantially incomplete.

Bruce's policy of slighting clearly differs from the activities in England and Wales. Cornell (2008, 248) suggested that slighting was used in north of Scotland because the sites had no military value while in the south it was used because the fortifications had too great a value to the English. Cornell goes on to suggest that castles were suited to the English mode of warfare, whereas Bruce's experience and tactics were better suited to other approaches.

If one aspect of the strategy Bruce adopted is worthy of being described as revolutionary, then it is surely this ruthless policy of the destruction of the first-rate royal castles of Scotland. Such a policy had no significant precedent nor was it to be repeated.

Cornell 2008, 250

A supplementary interpretation put forward here is that for the castles in the north of Scotland the assertion of authority was also a motivation behind the act of slighting. The two regions provided very different contexts for slighting. In the north Bruce was actively undermining potential enemies and emphasising his own power in doing so. The demolition of royal castles in the south showed he could be 'ruthless' but again the social significance of the act should not be overlooked. The English under Edward I had arrived in Scotland as conquerors with the intention to rule rather than transient invaders (see DeVries 2008 for a discussion of the distinction). Edward II nearly wept on hearing news that Edinburgh and Roxburgh had been recaptured by the Scots in 1314. A setback such as this was a loss of honour for the English king and it was appropriate –

even expected – for him to show grief and shame under these circumstances (White 1998, 143). The slighting of these castles would deny the king the opportunity to fully restore his honour, thus giving the shame permanence. Because the English had attempted to make their rule permanent, the castles became linked to English rule. Though they had previously built by Scots, they were now tools to be used against the people of the country. The destruction of these sites was therefore not simply a military expediency but an attack on the English king's honour and authority. What had previously been sites of Scottish royal power had been subverted by the English; damaging them repaid the perceived damage the English had done to Scotland.

Given the dual purpose of slighting, sending a powerful message to the English whilst hindering them militarily, it might be expected that Owain Glendower would try to replicate the success when he rebelled against English rule in 1400. However, while he sacked several towns he caused little damage to castles. The most likely reason is that slighting castles was a time consuming and skilled job. Whereas Bruce had the resources to do so, Glendower did not. The result was that two revolts against English rule had very different impacts on the built environment.

While the notion that 'slighting' was driven solely by military need has been disproven, it should still be noted that key martial structures were often a focus of attention, attacking what set apart castles from other high-status buildings. One of the more striking aspects of demolition is that some areas were specifically not damaged. The notion that chapels were effectively granted some form of immunity when they were free-standing structures is self-evident. After all they represented a different kind of authority, even when located within a castle. The Pipe Rolls for the reign of Henry III record that on 22<sup>nd</sup> September 1266

Whereas Louis, king of France, by letters lately required that the king [Henry III] cause the new castle on the Dordogne (Castillon sur Dordogne), in the diocese of Périgueux, to be delivered to Heymericus de Castro Novo or his heir, but destroyed, saving the church in the castle

*Patent Rolls of Henry III 1258–1266, 640*

making the separate treatment clear. The *in situ* Norman decorative stonework at the 12<sup>th</sup>-century chapel of St Mary de Castro within the bailey of Leicester Castle (Pevsner & Williamson 1985, 212–214), indicates the monastic

foundation – though diminished after 1143 when it was partly transferred to Leicester Abbey (Knowles & Hadcock 1971, 428–429) – was not included in the destruction inflicted on the buildings of the castle on the orders of Henry II in the 1170s. More surprising is the tentative conclusion that halls were not a favoured target of those who sought to destroy castles, as discussed earlier. As a social focus we might expect that in some cases they receive special attention. Instead the focus was on the most visible areas of a castle, as well as those most overtly military. In the case of Leicester this may have been because the castle retained judicial functions, and slighting the hall would have been a hindrance to administrative activities. The counterpart to this can be seen at Bedford Castle where the gaol must have been included in the castle's slighting as a year after the castle was slighted Henry III ordered the reconstruction of the town's gaol (discussed further in Chapter 7.3). Therefore, the curtain walls, ramparts, and great tower were typically the most likely to have been demolished because they did not affect the castle's administrative functions.

A further unexpected result of this investigation is the excavated evidence suggests that gatehouses were rarely targeted for destruction. As these buildings controlled the entrance to a castle they were foci for both defence and display. In the later medieval period gatehouses took on some of the symbolic roles previously associated with great towers. However, even at Harbottle where there is evidence suggesting the outer defences were slighted, excavations at the gatehouse did not provide evidence of slighting in this area (Crow 2004).

This chapter has addressed the first research question, establishing a chronology and geographical framework for understanding castle slighting. This has extended to an appreciation of where and when particular methods of destruction were employed. Most importantly it offers an in-depth understanding not just of the conditions and methods, but the motivations and which areas of the castle were most likely to be slighted. The ambition with this chapter was to identify sites where a convincing case can be made that they were slighted and to look for patterns within the group to inform further research. It would be futile to attempt to prove a site's destruction by examining the chapel or hall. An overview of earthworks may be indicative of slighting as is the case at Buckton, where a peculiar projection on one side of the castle was in fact a symptom of the castle's destruction, but ideally this would be corroborated by excavation.

Through this research the characteristics of slighting have become clear. It could use a variety of methods to unmake the castle, including dismantling buildings with picks, undermining structures, using spades and shovels to demolish banks and fill ditches, and fire to damage any structure standing. Most cases of slighting were undertaken by a hostile force rather than the owner attempting to prevent an enemy from using the fortification. It could be targeted against a specific feature, or widespread and particularly violent. Notably the excavation reports have typically not included human remains, which might be the case if a structure collapsed during battle and was immediately abandoned. What stands out is that the phenomenon of slighting was rich with meaning as members of elite medieval society sought to assert ascendancy and status over their rivals.

## Chapter 7 – Urbanism and slighted castles

Studies of castles within their wider settings arguably provide a platform for a much broader understanding of the aristocratic appropriation and manipulation of space in the middle ages, breaking down the artificial barriers that have traditionally compartmentalised castle study.

Creighton 2012, 150

### 7.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the relationship between castle slighting and associated urban centres, using urban archaeology, town surveys, excavation reports, and historical records to establish how the forced and sudden removal of a castle affected its settlement. In particular it will be important to establish to what extent the settlements suffered damage as a consequence of slighting: was the destruction ever carried over to the town, or were the effects secondary, and were urban defences treated in the same way as castles? It is only relatively recently that we have progress towards an understanding of the link between the castle and its landscape setting, and the role it played in shaping the morphology of urban centres has only recently been appreciated (Creighton 2004, 25; Fradley 2011). This chapter is a contribution towards that discussion.

The evidence from the previous chapters established that a number of slighted castles had attached settlements. It is well established through both documentary and archaeological evidence that a castle's construction could disrupt the existing fabric of a town, redirecting streets and leading to the demolition of property on the intended building site (Drage 1987, 119; Creighton 2002, 141–145). Before 1100, there is documentary evidence of the foundation of 93 castles in England; nearly half of these were located in or adjacent to urban centres (Drage 1987, 117). In England, inserting castles into existing towns was mostly restricted to the 11<sup>th</sup> century. While a castle could be added to a settlement, it was also possible for settlements to be created next to a castle. According to Maurice Beresford's (1967, 334) influential *New Towns of the Middle Ages*, '80% of the towns planted between 1066 and 1100 were alongside castles, and more than half of those between 1101 and 1135 were similarly situated'. For context the first group consists of 25 towns and the latter 17 (Beresford 1967, 637–638). Of the new towns established in England and



Wales between 1066 and 1150, 75% and 80% respectively were next to a castle (Drage 1987, 128).

From the mid-12<sup>th</sup> century onwards proportionally fewer new towns were created next to castles. Drage (1987, 128) uses the available evidence to suggest that in Wales the role of the castle in influencing the creation of towns was prominent, however he goes on to say 'with obvious and important exceptions, castles are rarely associated with settlements or market centres and have a small role in urban development'. The ability of castles to act as a central point in the landscape for economic activity, and to provide an economic boost either to an existing settlement or lead to the creation of a new one, led to Thompson (1991, 146–147) characterising the castle as 'midwife' for settlements. These two approaches should not be considered incompatible, and Thompson was aware of the figures Drage cited. Instead it provides a footing on which to approach the subject of slighted castles and their associated towns. When castles and towns shared a close relation in the landscape, this is indicative of economic as well as social ties between the two. Slighting offers archaeologists a chance to examine how the town fared once those ties were cut.

Ten sites are examined in this chapter, group based on common themes. The castles were identified as slighted in Chapters 4, 5, and 6 and the urban archaeology is discussed here. Pleshey and Saffron Walden are 12<sup>th</sup>-century castles with new towns created at the same time by the same owner and slighted later that century. Bedford and Leicester were both county towns in England whose castles were slighted after their owners rebelled against the king in the late 12<sup>th</sup> or early 13<sup>th</sup> century. Degannwy and Roxburgh were royal sites that experienced siege warfare and changed ownership several times before dramatic slighting and subsequent abandonment. The castles at Ludgershall and Dryslwyn were attached to mid-ranking towns, but had differing fates; Ludgershall was slighted in the 12<sup>th</sup> century and then rebuilt by the monarch, whereas Dryslwyn housed Welsh rebels supporting Owain Glendower and was subsequently slighted by the English. Finally, Framlingham and Wareham are both mid-ranking towns slighted by the monarch in the 12<sup>th</sup> century. A broad range of dates and a wide geographical distribution allows for a nuanced discussion of the impact of slighting beyond the castle walls.

## 7.2 Pleshey and Saffron Walden – two Mandeville castles

Geoffrey de Mandeville, Earl of Essex, was arrested 1143 and the *Gesta Stephani* records ‘the king brought Geoffrey to London under very close guard and made ready to hang him if he did not hand over the Tower and the castles he had built with wondrous toil and skill’ (*Gesta Stephani* trans. Potter 1976, 163). Mandeville capitulated, ceding control. This marks the first entry of Pleshey and Saffron Walden in the historical record (Charlton 1977, 137). While Saffron Walden (*Waledana*) was valued at £50 in 1086 the Domesday Survey does not mention the castle and Pleshey was not recorded at all (Bassett 1982, 22; Charlton 1977, 136). Saffron Walden was evidently a well-established town in the late 11<sup>th</sup> century, but in the case of Pleshey there is no archaeological evidence for early medieval inhabitation. Instead Pleshey was probably founded around the same time as the castle (Essex County Council 1999a, 9). Therefore, under the ownership of a single magnate we have an example of an urban castle and a castle borough and can examine how they fared when their respective castles were slighted.

Saffron Walden Castle lies at the north end of the medieval settlement; the inner bailey contained the Norman great tower while the outer bailey lay to the west (Bassett 1982, 19, 25). The outer bailey enclosed an area of c. 1.25 hectares. The rampart and ditch enclosing the bailey is dated to the early 12<sup>th</sup> century, based on the assumption that it was complete by 1143 when Mandeville was arrested (Bassett 1982, 19, 25). A 20-hectare section of the town was enclosed southeast of the castle’s outer bailey (Fig. 7.1); this involved surrounding the town with a rectilinear earthwork commonly referred to as the *magnum fossatum* or Battle Ditches (Essex County Council 1999b, 14). Previously attributed to the first half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, excavations in Battle Ditches discovered 12<sup>th</sup>-century pottery, and a reassessment of a previously discovered assemblage of Hedingham ware discovered underneath the bank led to it being ascribed to the mid-12<sup>th</sup> century (Andrews & Mundy 2002, 265–266). This indicates that when Mandeville founded Saffron Walden Castle he also lay out the larger enclosure, planning for a significant expansion of the town as a key manorial centre. In 1141 Mandeville was granted a charter to move Newport’s market ‘into his castle at Walden, with all the customs which better belonged to that market before then’ (Bassett 1982, 19–20). This has led to the assumption, as mentioned by Bassett (1982: ix–x) that the market was in

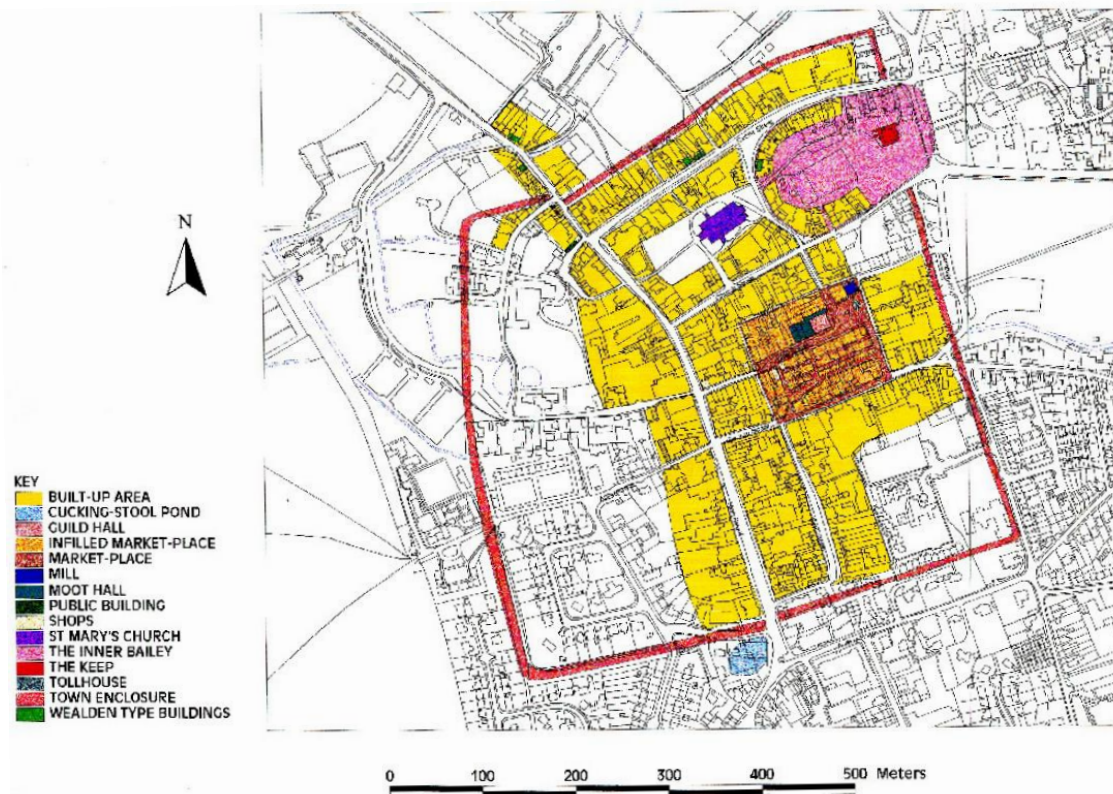


Fig. 7.1. The medieval layout of Saffron Walden, showing the limit of the 12<sup>th</sup>-century expansion. From Essex County Council 1999b, 48.

the outer bailey (marked on Fig. 7.1), however, excavation at Market Row south of the castle between 1984 and 1987 recovered small amounts of 12<sup>th</sup>-century pottery (Andrews & Mundy 2002, 266). Under previous interpretations (cf Bassett 1982) it was thought this area was created in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, but this evidence would suggest activity much earlier. If this area was a marketplace from the start, it would be very unusual for the town to have two contemporary markets. On balance, it is likely there in fact never was a market within the castle as stipulated in the charter, but it was always to the south. This is an important consideration as otherwise it would imply a very significant reshaping of the town in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. This therefore demands a recalibration of our understanding of Saffron Walden. Previously it had seemed the early medieval town had a castle added, slighted sooner after, and then saw planned expansion in following century that never reached fruition. Instead the expansion period was restricted to the 12<sup>th</sup> century and the failure of the town to expand in the manner Mandeville expected can be largely attributed to the removal of seigneurial power. The slighting of the castle was a symptom of this change in power dynamics rather than the cause off the stagnation of the town.

Pleshey is a roughly circular town, with the castle occupying the centre and a large part of the south of the settlement. The castle consisted of a central mound surmounted by a great tower, with kidney shaped baileys to the north and south. The presence of a northern bailey was confirmed by several watching briefs and trial excavations, and timbers from the remains of a palisade surrounding the northern bailey were felled in 1110 ±5 AD, a date reached through dendrochronological analysis (Fletcher 1977). This means that while the foundation of the castle is not documented, it can reasonably be assumed to have taken place in the 12<sup>th</sup> century. The ditch runs parallel to Back Lane (Fig. 7.2), fossilising the original layout of the town. The main road ran southwest to northeast through the northern bailey. An extensive urban survey carried out on behalf of English Heritage suggested that at the time of the confiscation of Mandeville's castles Pleshey consisted of the motte and northern bailey, while the southern bailey was added when the castle was refortified with royal permission after 1167; however, the survey does not provide evidence or reasoning to support this point (Essex County Council 1999a, 3–4). Two charters were signed by King Stephen while at Pleshey, one dating to 1138–1148 and the other to 1136–1152 (*Regesta Regum Anglo-Normannorum 1066–1154* trans. Cronne & Davis 1968, 15, 86), marking it as a place of some importance. The town had a market before 1274 (Britnell 1982, 16) but it is unclear when the market was founded. At both Saffron Walden and Pleshey the main road through the area passed through one of the baileys, and at Pleshey the marketplace ended up being centred on this road (Essex County Council 1999b, 12). Parallels can be found at Richard's Castle (Herefordshire) and Ongar (Essex) where the outer bailey of each castle contained the town market as the main road crossed the enclosure (Schofield & Vince 2003, 55). This route gave the lord of the castle control over passage of good and influence over trade, suggesting taxation and control of traffic through the area may have been a particular concern.

The Pipe Rolls record that in 1157–8 £9 12s 4d was spent on 'throwing down Earl Geoffrey's castle(s)' (Bassett 1982, 16). It is generally assumed this applied to Pleshey and Saffron Walden (Bassett 1982, 16), and as was discussed in the previous chapters archaeological excavations have uncovered evidence of destruction at both sites. For two towns so closely linked to their

associated castles, the removal of the castle might cause a shift in the dynamic of the town.

Saffron Walden Castle was repaired soon after it was damaged as demonstrated by the presence of a square-plan fire place, which is typically dated to the later 12<sup>th</sup> century, and a comparable example at Orford Castle (Suffolk) is dated to 1165–73. This led Bassett (1982, 50) to propose the great tower at Saffron Walden at least was kept in use from the 12<sup>th</sup> century, though by the 16<sup>th</sup> century it was in a state of ruin. In addition, the *Liber de fundatione Caenobii de Walden* documents an incident in the 1190s in relation to ‘the castle which is over against us’ and goes on to say that Geoffrey fitz Piers, who controlled the area, ‘betook himself to the castle’. The castle in question is likely to have been Saffron Walden, which would indicate the buildings were in a habitable state (Bassett 1982, 18). A period of repair and reoccupation is suggested for the 12<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, but excavations in the 1970s produced minimal evidence to support this hypothesis (Bassett 1982, 61).

Saffron Walden and Pleshey were returned to the Mandeville family later in the 12<sup>th</sup> century and descended through their heirs until 1236 when Humphrey de Bohun inherited the family estates through marriage (Bassett 1982: note 67). Walden Priory was made an abbey in 1190. It was founded by Geoffrey de Mandeville in the first half of the 12<sup>th</sup> century about three-quarters of a mile west of High Street, beyond the town itself (Bassett 1982, 21–22). The relationship between the town and the abbey has been highlighted by Essex County Council (1999b, 25) as a research priority, implying it is not particularly well understood. In 1295 the abbey was granted a Tuesday market, indicated it competed with the town for trade (Bassett 1982, 22). This may have been a contributing factor to the town’s limited growth in the Middle Ages; while an area of 20 hectares was enclosed by the *magnum fossatum* in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, Bassett (1982, 26) notes that most of the southern portion was underdeveloped until the modern period. The lack of activity in the south of the town is borne out by a paucity of medieval evidence recovered from trenching in this area in the 1980s (Andrews & Mundy 2002, 265).

The slighting of Saffron Walden Castle meant the town’s development was altered and returning the lands seized by the king did little to improve its prosperity. The slighting of the castle was a symbol of the Mandeville family’s failing power and the emergence of the market at the priory, competing with the

one in the town, indicates a continued lack of seigneurial authority imposed in the area.

At Pleshey, the castle was partially refortified. In 1180 William de Mandeville was given permission to fortify Pleshey Castle (Williams 1977, 12), indicating the king did not object to the castle being repaired. Certainly, the fact William de Mandeville's marriage to Hawise was solemnised at the castle the same year would indicate it was in a sufficient state of repair to host such an occasion (Williams 1977, 12, 18). An interim report in *Medieval Archaeology* suggests the rampart enclosing the southern bailey may have post-dated the possible work around 1180, though does not give detailed evidence. It does, however, note that it overlaid a previous bank, which was probably part of the town enclosure (Webster and Cherry 1974, 196). At present the short reports in *Medieval Archaeology* represent the total of the published information relating to the later excavations at Pleshey Castle.

Watching briefs for Pleshey's northern bailey discovered the ditches had been deliberately filled in, though not completely. 14<sup>th</sup>-century pottery was found amongst the upper fills, suggesting it was left partially filled for a considerable time. This is corroborated by documentary sources: rental records from 1273 and 1517 refer to a ditch near Back Lane, indicating it was an extant feature (Essex County Council 1999a, 10–11; Priddy 1988, 166–168). This treatment contrasts with the southern part of the castle. Not only was there building work, but at least the southern part of the motte ditch was re-cut having been infilled in the 12<sup>th</sup> century (Youngs & Clark 1982, 183). The motte ditch may have been re-cut in its entirety, but this is unproven given only a trial trench was excavated in the southern section. The extensive urban survey for Pleshey suggests the creation of the southern bailey post-dates the slighting and was part of a process of refortifying the castle (Essex County Council 1999a, 3).

As demonstrated by the urban survey, the consensus used to be that in the early 12<sup>th</sup> century Pleshey Castle consisted of a motte with a bailey attached to the north and following the slighting of the 1150s, the castle was repaired but the northern bailey abandoned and replaced by one to the south (Essex County Council 1999a, 9). The shift of emphasis would demand an explanation which is not easily produced. Instead, it is more likely that at the time the castle was slighted it consisted of a motte with two baileys. Both baileys suffered a degree of destruction, after which only the southern enclosure was refortified. Instead



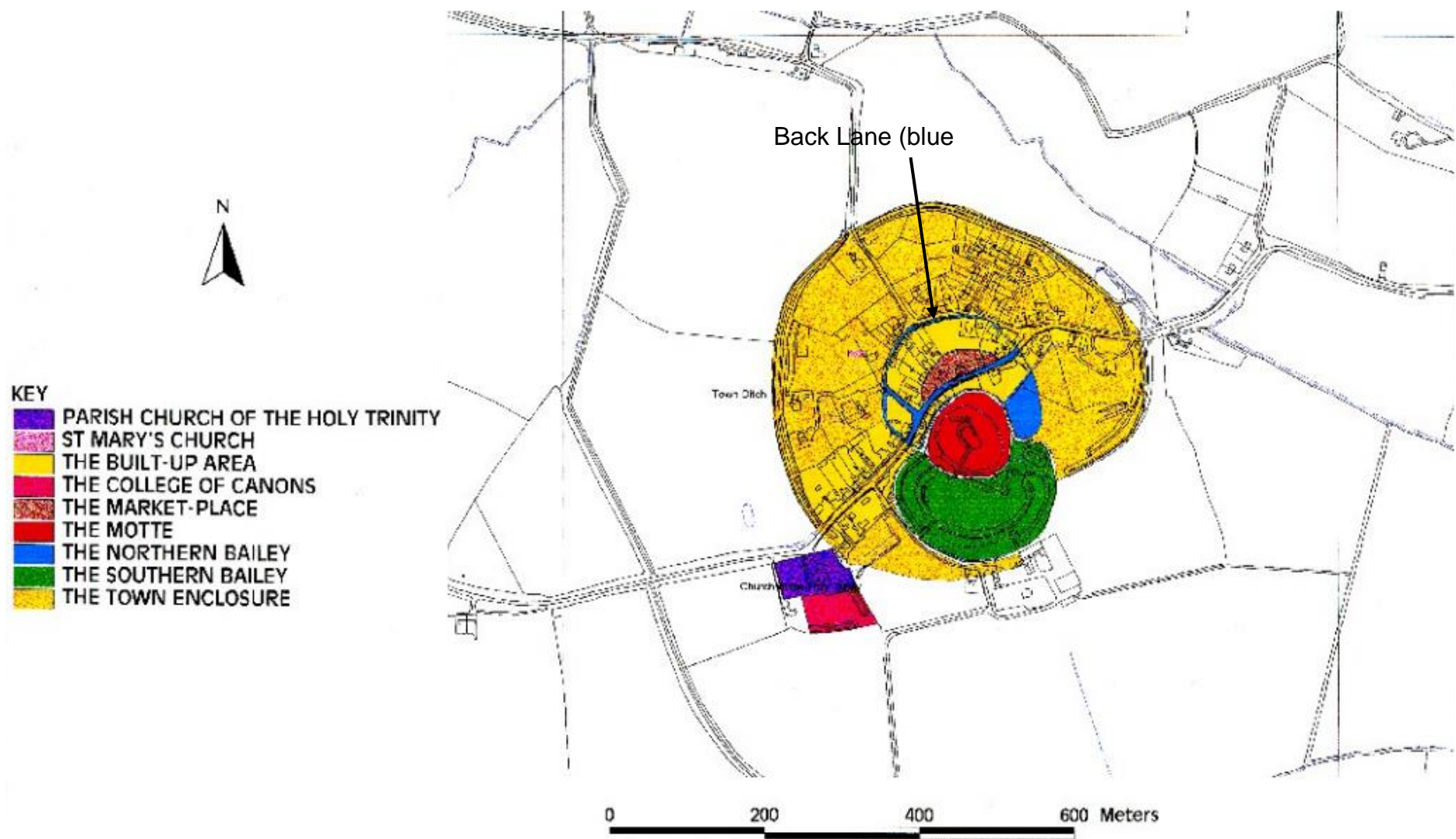


Fig. 7.2. The medieval layout of Pleshey, showing the main route through the town which also passed through the northern bailey. The market lay within the bailey, on the north side of this road and remained here after the castle was slighted. From Essex County Council 1999a, 26.

of a relative renaissance for the castle, the evidence suggests significant contraction of the area it occupied. The northern bailey was defortified, perhaps even completely abandoned as part of the castle. While Saffron Walden arguably suffered as it was no longer a major seigneurial residence, the town of Pleshey remained the seat of the Mandevilles and their successors, the Bohun family (Essex County Council 1999a, 4). The British Archaeology Report on the excavations at Pleshey suggested the reference to a church at Pleshey in 1244–59, as opposed to a chapel built by William de Mandeville, indicated the settlement had grown in the intervening years and the population was numerous and wealthy enough to merit a larger establishment than a chapel (Williams 1977, 15–16). This suggests that while the castle occupied a smaller area than before it was slighted, the continuation of lordship at Pleshey helped foster the settlement.

The settlement at Pleshey was originally restricted to the northern bailey, but the creation of a circuit of earth and timber urban defences (probably after 1167) indicates the intention to expand the town (Essex County Council 1999a, 11). This new work (Fig. 7.2) enclosed an area of 14 hectares. As was the case with Saffron Walden, the built-up area failed to extend to the new enclosure, remaining restricted to the centre that had previously formed the town in any case. A rental record from 1273 mentions 46 shops, nine stalls, and three workshops, as noted in the extensive urban survey (Essex County Council 1999a, 12). Despite this in the lay subsidy of 1334, of the 81 valued settlements in Essex, Pleshey's value of £13 4s 7d was the lowest, nearly half that of the next settlement (Letters 2007). While nearly 200 years removed from Pleshey's slighting, it shows that economically the town was a backwater even though the castle had been repaired. Though the population may have increased as demonstrated by the presence of a church as opposed to a chapel, growth is relative and compared to the rest of the county Pleshey was a minor settlement.

The late 12<sup>th</sup> century is characterised as 'a period of considerable economic expansion and new boroughs [were] founded to profit from trade flowing along existing routes, to develop new routes and to establish new ports' (Butler 1976, 39). The fact Saffron Walden did not manage to capitalise on this illustrates the impact of the weakened lordship in its wider context. The planned expansions demonstrate the ambitions of the lord, while the shift away from the military aspect indicates an acceptance of the changed nature of power. Not



repairing the northern bailey at Pleshey separated the economic prosperity of the town from the military fortunes of the castle and thereby the lord.

Saffron Walden subtly contrasts with the fortunes of Pleshey. Saffron Walden remained a centre of administration through the castle's repair and continued role as a seigneurial residence. The continued patronage benefitted the town over the long term. At Pleshey the continuity of occupation and patronage was mirrored in the continuity of the market place and the relatively swift repair of the. While Saffron Walden Castle may have continued in use, the available evidence suggests it was used less frequently than Pleshey Castle. The result is that we can compare two settlements with similar origins in terms of patron, chronology, and even layout to provide a detailed understanding of how a medieval town could be affected by the destruction of its castle. Ultimately, the evidence from Pleshey and Saffron Walden emphasises how important lordly power was in determining the fortune not just of their respective castles but their associated towns. Rather than the slighting of the castle causing stagnation of either town, it was the undermining of Geoffrey de Mandeville's authority that directly led to the castles being slighted and the lack of investment in either settlement.

### **7.3 Bedford and Leicester – county towns and rebel strongholds**

Though the castles of Bedford and Leicester were not slighted at the same time, they share some commonalities. Both are county towns adjacent to rivers, the River Soar for Leicester, and the Great Ouse for Bedford; and in each case, the castle was located in a corner of the city, using their respective rivers as natural boundaries (Albion Archaeology 2005, 107; Courtney 1998, 111). Both were urban castles imposed on pre-existing settlements: Bedford's origins lay in the early medieval period, while Leicester's character was shaped by its history as a Roman town (Albion Archaeology 2005, 21; Lucas 1980–81, 1). Both castles were destroyed by the king in response to the rebellion of their owners, in 1174 for Leicester and 1224 for Bedford. There are also significant differences between the two cases. While the town of Leicester was enclosed by a town wall, the part of Bedford north of the river and containing the castle was not similarly defended (Creighton & Higham 2005, 26). At Leicester, excavation has shown the town was at least partially demolished along the riverside, perhaps mirroring the fate of the castle. The most important difference is that while

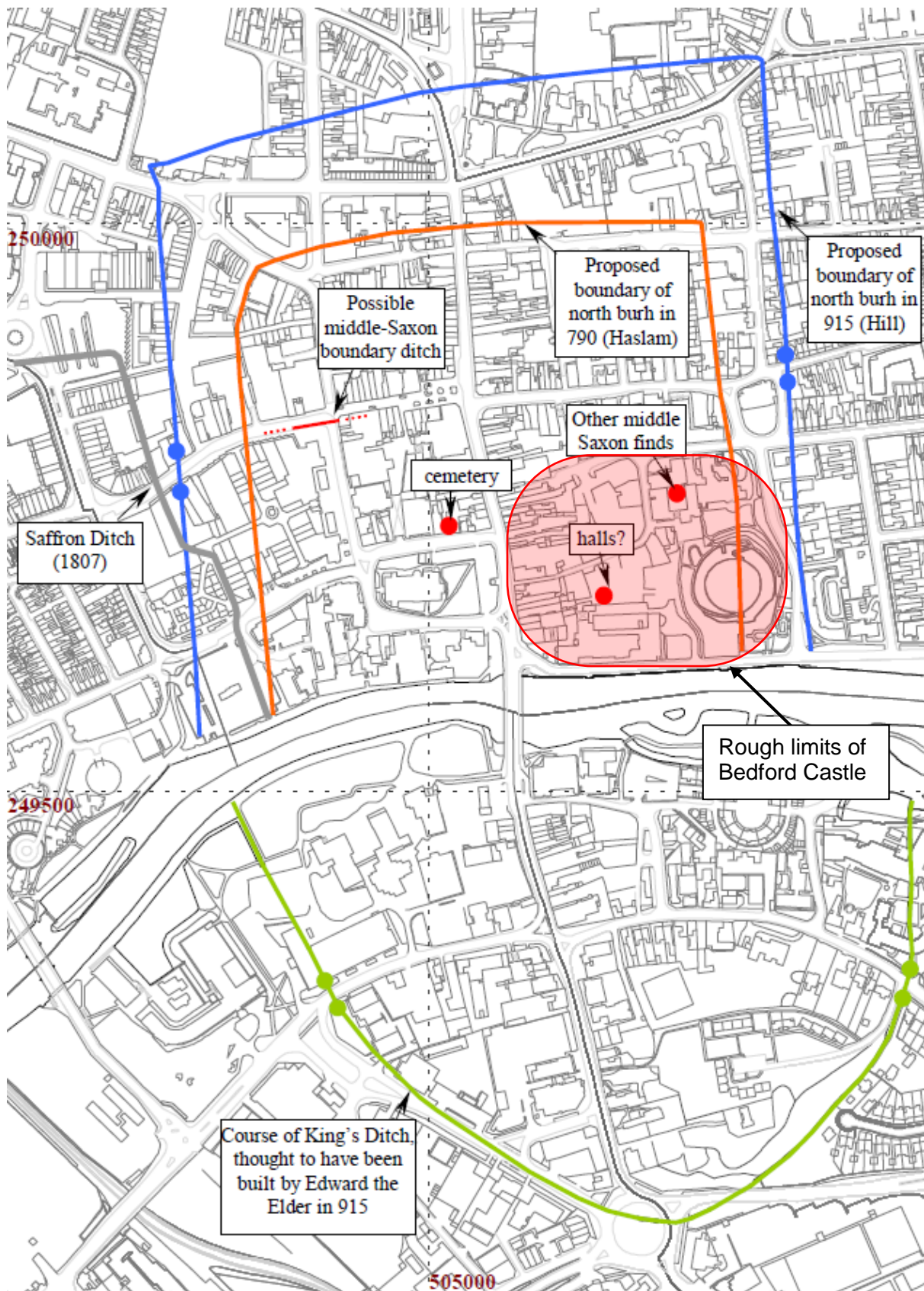


Fig. 7.3. The proposed layout of early medieval Bedford. Note the disruption of the grid street plan caused by Bedford Castle (highlighted in red) in the south-east corner of the north part of the town, cutting across the likely burh boundaries. From Albion Archaeology 2005, 91.

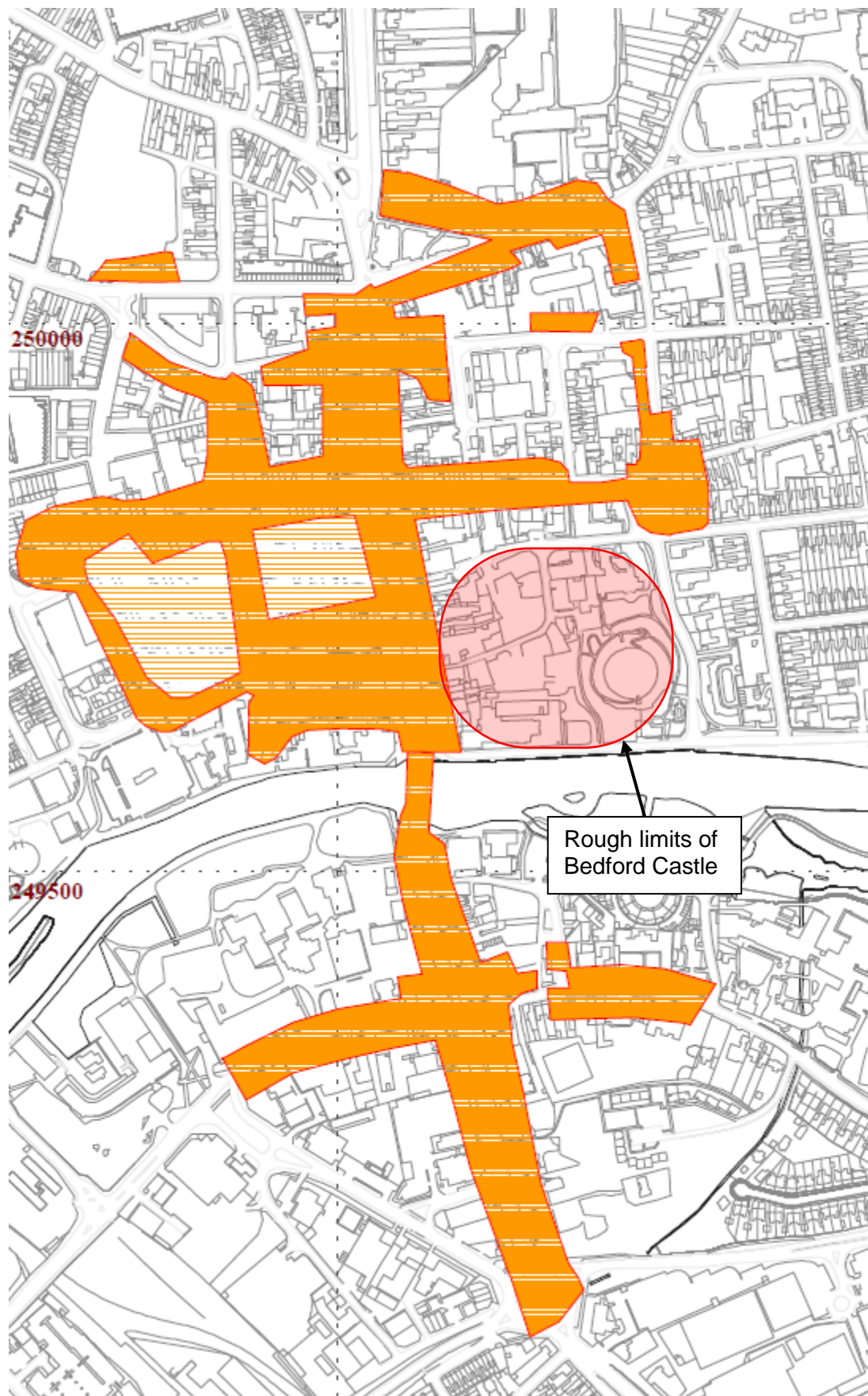


Fig. 7.4. The extent of developed areas in Bedford by 1610 based on John Speed's map. The area of Bedford Castle (highlighted in red) was left undeveloped. From Albion Archaeology 2005, 94.

Bedford Castle was not refortified Leicester Castle continued in use. These two towns show how different slighting can be and the various ways even the most important towns in a county could be affected.

At the time of the Norman Conquest, Bedford was an established town, with two main areas of settlement either side of the Great Ouse, one to the north of the river and one to the south. The impact of the Norman castle on the early medieval town of Bedford is clear in the settlement's layout: occupying the south-eastern corner of the town, it was imposed on the pre-existing grid pattern of streets (Fig. 7.3; Drage 1987, 119). However, it was not merely the initial construction in the late 11<sup>th</sup> or early 12<sup>th</sup> century that affected the town (Baker *et al.* 1979a, 9–10). According to contemporary chronicler Ralph de Coggeshall, in about 1215 Faulkes de Bréauté expanded the castle and

pulled down to the foundations the great church of St Paul which from antiquity had stood next to the castle, and the church of St Cuthbert, and with the stones of the churches he built towers, walls and outer walls, and surrounded it on all sides with deep paved ditches.

Baker *et al.* 1979a, 10–11

The destruction of a church was highly unusual and would have caused considerable consternation amongst the laity and clergy.

Bedford Castle was destroyed in 1224 after Bréauté rebelled against the king. The castle was besieged, with Henry III personally present, and once the castle fell the garrison was hanged. Comprehensive destruction of the castle followed, and excavations have shown this was not written propaganda but a very effective act of demolition. The extensive urban survey of Bedford suggests the destruction of the castle must have had a significant impact on the town, noting that until then the castle had 'employed considerable numbers of craftsmen skilled in building, carpentry, metalwork and other crafts' and 'provided a large stationary market for goods and services of all kinds'. The report asserts 'the sudden destruction of the castle must have had a devastating effect on the local economy, with long-lasting effects on Bedford throughout the later medieval period' (Albion Archaeology 2005, 33).

The site of the castle itself was given to William de Beauchamp. He held the castle before Bréauté seized control and Beauchamp hoped it might have been returned to him intact. Instead he was given permission to build an unfortified structure on the site if he chose. In 1361 the area was described as a



'void plot' so it is likely Beauchamp never made use of this permission (Baker *et al.* 1979a, 10–11). Though Beauchamp was not the person intended to suffer through the slighting he suffered collateral damage at the very least to his pride if not reputation. This effectively meant a significant portion of the medieval town was left vacant; a growing a prosperous town might be expected to encroach on this area over time, but John Speed's 1610 map of Bedford shows the castle area was under-developed in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century (Fig. 7.4). This can be used to infer the strongly negative economic impact the urban assessment proposed. While Drage (1987, 123) suggests one of the contributing factors to Bedford Castle's slighting was that the castles in the county had 'no military value'. The implication is that with no other strong castles to contend with, there was no need to repurpose Bedford. However, the social aspect of the destruction is clear, and the extent of damage indicates this was not an act which was influenced by military expediency but was first and foremost meant to be a powerful statement that rebellion would not be tolerated. It was indisputably a form of punishment, enhanced by the fact Bréauté himself eluded the king's grasp.

The churches of St Paul and St Cuthbert were destroyed by Bréauté to clear the way for the castle's expansion. St Paul's was rebuilt using stone from the slighted castle, and the replacement for St Cuthbert's also probably used the castle as a source for building material (Albion Archaeology 2005, 33–34). This use is significant, especially since St Cuthbert's was originally the main church in the town. An estimate by Morris (1987, 177) places Bedford in the lower-middle range of medieval towns in terms of how many churches each had, placing it on a par with towns such as Dover (Kent), Guildford (Surrey), Lichfield (Staffordshire), Nottingham (Nottinghamshire), St Albans (Hertfordshire), Torksey (Lincolnshire), and Wareham (Dorset). Of the urban centres extant in 1066, more than half had more than one church in the medieval period, while of the boroughs founded between 1100 and 1300 a mere 4% had more than one church (Morris 1987, 177). Churches were therefore a key aspect of the urban landscape especially in settlements founded before the Norman Conquest, and the small number at Bedford meant the impact of dismantling two was acutely felt. Using parts of the castle to rebuild the churches was an equal and opposite reaction to Bréauté's work when enhancing the castle; whereas the castle was improved at the expense of the

churches, now the churches were rebuilt using materials from the castle. Repurposing material was a highly symbolic act and has parallels elsewhere. At St Albans the town's mill was owned by the abbey, which allowed the exaction of fees for using the mill (Smith 2009a, 409), not uncommon arrangement. In 1330 the townspeople set up handmills in defiance of the abbey's rights over milling. When the rebellion was quashed, quernstones from the handmills were used to pave the floors of the abbey's outer parlour, especially the entrance (see Chapter 6.2.1) (Dunn 2004, 145; Lucas 2014, 40; *Chronica Maiora of Thomas Walsingham* trans. Preest 2005, 136). Reusing building material took the physical manifestation of rebellion and gave it a new purpose, one where it no longer threatened the peace and served as a reminder of past struggles. The reuse of material in Bedford was not restricted to ecclesiastic buildings. The demolition of the castle meant a large amount of usable stone became available, and consequently this material was used to repair buildings in the surrounding area (Godber 1969, 54). This allowed the castle to be reabsorbed into the city in a way that robbed it of its dominion over the area. A structure which was intimately linked with a man who rebelled against the king was rendered inoffensive and used to repair the fabric of the city it had damaged.

Between 1967 and 1977 more than 30 areas within the historic north and south cores of Bedford were examined as part of a programme of rescue archaeology. The results of these excavations helped to create a narrative of economic growth in the 12<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> centuries, followed by a period of decline in the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries. The report on ten years of archaeological excavation noted 'From the 12<sup>th</sup>–14<sup>th</sup> centuries, there is an increasing survival of evidence, also suggesting an expanding pattern of trade and industry' (Baker *et al.* 1979b, 294–295). It is debatable whether the presence of a major castle would have prevented or mitigated the economic decline of the later medieval period, but the broad range of material culture and the prosperity indicated by the excavated evidence suggests the removal of Bedford Castle had not depressed the economy by the 14<sup>th</sup> century, although the nature of the evidence precludes close dating so initial effects may have been disguised by long-term trends.

The impact of the destruction of the castle at Bedford, therefore, seems to be primarily physical rather than economic. The reason for the town's resilience was due to the nature of power in the borough. The VCH for Bedfordshire notes the 'borough ... strengthened by royal charters, retained

independence of the powerful feudal lords dwelling so near [at the Bedford Castle]'; the author goes further, suggesting the events of 1224 in which the castle was destroyed was a key element in negating conflict between the barons and the burgesses of the town (Page 1912a, 1–9). This contrasts with Pleshey and Saffron Walden where the lord was the driver behind the town's economic development rather than burgesses.

At Bedford the castle was the physical embodiment of baronial authority; Faulkes used it as a base from which he could harry the surrounding area if he chose, and in 1217 went so far as to attack the town of St Albans (Page 1912b, 9–15). In this case, removing the castle and the power of the barony of Bedford allowed the burgesses to prosper. While the area of the castle itself was not reused until centuries later, the market place was established next to the church of St Paul and a moot hall was built, indicating a new focus of governance. Meanwhile Godber (1969, 55–56) interprets the presence of a Jewish population at Bedford, evidenced in documents spanning 1192 to 1266, as proof that the town was economically active and prosperous.

One particularly instructive piece of evidence is the role of the gaol in Bedford. It was established in 1166 and was one of several created under the orders of Henry II (Pugh 1955, 9–12). The link between castles and prisons is borne out by the Assize of Clarendon, in which the king mandated gaols must be built in boroughs or towns, and the Assize of Northampton in which it was declared that if a prisoner could not be taken to the sheriff he must be held at the nearest castle (Pugh 1955, 2–5; Pollock & Maitland 1898, 516 see also Nevell 2014–15). A writ of 1225 ordered the sheriff of Bedfordshire to build a gaol at Bedford (Page 1912a, 1–9). The sudden need for a gaol, decades after county towns should have been provided with them, indicates a previous gaol was most likely located in the castle itself and amongst the structures destroyed when the castle was slighted. The destruction of the gaol, evidently an integral part of the mechanisms of law and administration in the county, was incidental to the destruction of the castle, but serves as another reminder of the viciousness with which Henry III treated the site and the defenders. The primary purpose of slighting the castle was to show what happened to those who egregiously opposed the king's rule. As Chapters 4, 5, and 6 demonstrated, total destruction of a castle was not unheard of but elements not integral to the identity of the castle were often spared.

The Earl of Leicester, Robert de Beaumont, joined Henry II's sons in rebellion against the king in 1173. Peace was agreed the following year, and the treaty stipulated that '[the king's] liegemen and barons who withdrew from him and followed his sons are to receive possession of their lands which they held

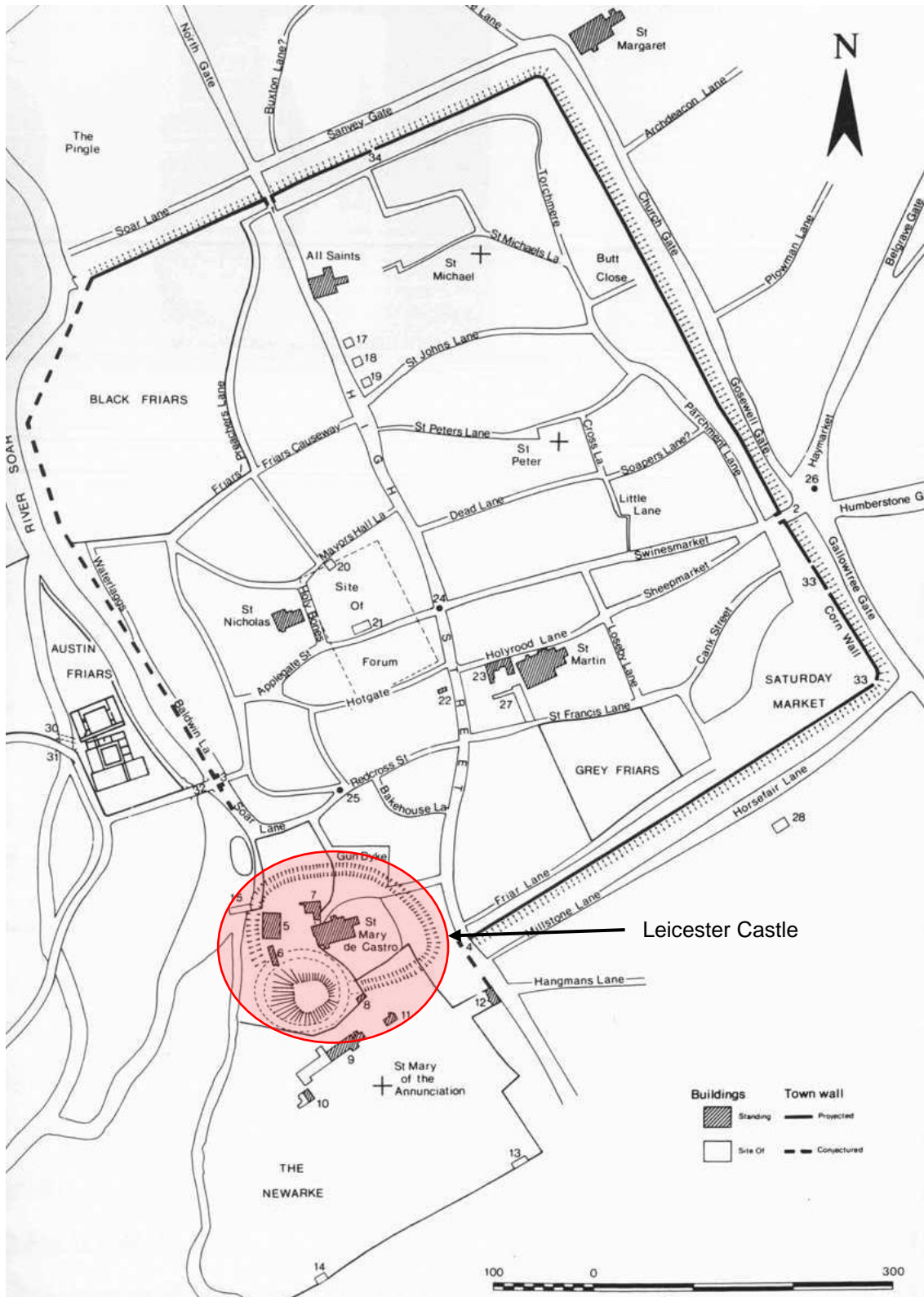


Fig. 7.5. A plan of medieval Leicester. Austin Friars on the land in the fork of the River Soar was not founded until the 13<sup>th</sup> century. The castle is highlighted in red. From Buckley & Lucas 1987, 56.



fifteen days before they withdrew from him' (Warren 1973, 75–79).

Unfortunately for the Earl of Leicester he was excluded from the terms of the peace treaty as he had been captured during the war. As a result, the castles of Leicester and Groby were demolished, and it is likely that Hinckley suffered the same fate (Cantor 1977–78, 32; King 1983a: n8). Mountsorrel Castle was confiscated by Henry II and remained in the king's possession when the earl's other castles were returned to his ownership in 1177 on his release from captivity (Warren 1973, 138–9). Before his capture, the earl's relationship with the king was dealt a telling blow when he attempted to strike the monarch during negotiations (Moore 1925, 13). This circumstance may account for the unusual treatment meted out to the earl, and the settlement and castle of Leicester.

Though Leicester's civic defences have been the subject of multiple watching briefs and small-scale excavations, the condition of the archaeological record was such that a monograph on the subject from 1987 noted 'The archaeological evidence for the town defences of Leicester in the post-Roman period is particularly scanty ... Thus, it is necessary to rely heavily on the documentary and historical sources' (Buckley & Lucas 1987, 56) (Fig. 7.5). Though parts of the north, east, and south defences had been excavated, the evidence relating to the slighting of the town walls was limited to the Pipe Rolls from Henry II's reign. Later references indicate the walls were maintained in the later medieval period, which suggests that demolition was not extensive to begin with (Fig. 7.6) (Buckley & Lucas 1987, 11–48).

Excavations at Westbridge Wharf in 2003 provided archaeological evidence for the partial destruction of the town walls. Before then, whether the town wall continued along the west side of the settlement had long been a point of debate. A dearth of evidence combined with the proximity of the River Soar resulted in a theory that Leicester did not need a town wall here because of natural defences (Lucas 1978–79, 61). The river was diverted eastwards when the castle was built (Cooper 2010, 22) which would have offered additional protection and is likely to have also applied to the town defences. The excavations in 2003 established the line of the Roman and later town wall: the 2.9m-wide stone foundations were discovered, as was the associated ditch to the west of the wall. The foundations were continuous except for a 2m stretch



Fig. 7.6. A reconstruction of how Leicester may have appeared during the medieval period. From this viewpoint, the castle occupies the top corner. The city walls are decaying in some places and in a state of disrepair. From Morris, Buckley & Codd 2011.

where stones had been robbed out and the wall on either side had been scorched. The scorching led the excavators to suggest this was evidence of sapping activity, and probably corresponded to the slighting ordered by Henry II. This is especially likely as Matthew Paris noted the walls of Leicester had been sapped and toppled (Cooper 2010, 16–17; 20, 23). A similar feature was discovered to the north of this area, still along the western defences of the city at Bath Street, indicating the sapping was not restricted to a single location (Cooper 2010, 23). Given the close proximity of the River Soar, it is highly unlikely the sapping was the result of a siege. The natural defence of the river would have made other parts of the town wall a more promising prospect for any potential attackers given the limited room to manoeuvre between the river and the wall and the waterlogged nature of the ground. Instead it is much more likely that this destructive episode corresponds to the demolition documented in the Pipe Rolls.

An extra-mural trench was discovered in front of the town wall. The excavators presented two possible uses for the trench: either it was to prevent sapping or was the foundation trench of a mud-built town wall, meant to cover a hole in the main wall (Cooper 2010, 20). The second is the more likely of the two possibilities given that the river would have provided sufficient deterrent to

most attackers. Its fills included 12<sup>th</sup>- and 13<sup>th</sup>-century pottery, so while no dating evidence was recovered from the destruction contexts of the town wall, it can be inferred that it took place in the 12<sup>th</sup> century. This is compatible with Cooper's (2010, 20) theory the stone-built town wall was slighted in the 1170s, and a lesser wall built later. The discovery of a lime kiln close to the inner side of the town wall and cutting through the rampart indicates the repair trench was only a temporary arrangement before the stone-built wall could be properly repaired. The pottery discovered from this feature dated to the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries, mirroring the evidence from the trench itself (Cooper 2010, 19, 23). The walls were an extant feature in the late medieval period as demonstrated by robbing activity which took place in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries (Cooper 2010, 23).

It is, however, possible the town wall was dismantled to improve access to the city from the river. The lime kiln could be related to a stone building close to the wall as opposed to the wall itself, and the trench a defence against sapping rather than an indication that the wall was going to be repaired. London's Roman wall along the north bank of the Thames was allowed to decay so by the 12<sup>th</sup> century it was in poor condition, contrasting with the rest of the wall which was generally maintained (Brooke 1989, 32). If the capital was prepared to allow this public decay of its walls, this diminishes the social importance of the structures. On balance, however, the most likely explanation is there was the intention to repair the wall and that the sapping was part of the destruction caused by Henry II.

As the discovered sapping points are small relative to the whole circuit of the town walls – the one at Westbridge Wharf measured about 2m across – it may be happenstance that excavations have not discovered them on the other sides of the town walls. We are therefore given two possibilities: either the destruction was limited to the west wall, which is where the available evidence is focused, or it was more extensive and has so far eluded archaeologists. It should of course be remembered that absence of evidence should not be taken as evidence of absence. However, as Buckley and Lucas (1987) noted, the amount recorded in the Pipe Rolls does not indicate that demolition was widespread. A total of £2 11 s 9d was spent slighting both the castle and town walls of Leicester, recorded in the Pipe Rolls (Fox 1944–45, 136). This was much smaller than the sums spent demolishing Walton and Framlingham

castles that same year, £31 8s 3d and £24 2s 6d respectively, also recorded in the Pipe Rolls from Henry II's reign (Brown 1950, 137), which suggests the scale of destruction at Leicester was in fact less than experienced elsewhere. This leads to the question of the purpose of the demolition. The definition of slighting discussed in Chapter 1.5 is that slighting degraded the value of the structure. Putting one hole in a circuit of walls, or even a few, would have diminished the symbolic value of the town walls and replaced that with value for the person ordering the slighting as it would be a highly visible reminder of the town's rebellion against Henry II. However, if the intention was to remove its value as a fortification more extensive demolition would be needed. With a greater portion of the circuit damaged it would have been harder to repair, especially in the midst of a rebellion. Ultimately, the extensive nature of urban defences compared to piecemeal excavations of them means that in many cases we may be unable to find the evidence of slighting.

A tentative suggestion can therefore be put forward. When Leicester Castle was demolished, the men paid to carry out the work also set about demolishing part of the city walls. To what extent this was carried out is uncertain, however the available evidence points towards the work focussing on the west side of the circuit, with north, east, and south sides perhaps untouched as no evidence of slighting was recovered from the 27 sites discussed in the monograph (Buckley & Lucas 1987, 11–48). The reason for targeting the west wall is problematic in the same way that debate once focussed on whether such a wall existed in the first place. Its position close to the River Soar limits its importance as a fortification while if the intention was to leave the town defenceless, the north or south walls would have been logical choices. This would also have had the effect of making the damage highly visible to anyone approaching Leicester along the main roads.

While Leicester's town walls were partially slighted, the impact on the town itself was not permanent. The Lay Subsidy of 1334 puts the value of Leicester at £267, making it the most valuable town in the county by more than 25%, and nearly double the third most valuable town in Leicestershire (Letters 2007). The economic dominance of the town was secure. Less removed from the events of the late 12<sup>th</sup> century, in 1228 the people of Leicester were granted a charter allowing them to hold an annual fair, becoming the fifth settlement in Leicestershire to be granted a fair, of which only one was before 1219 (Letters

2007). This indicates economic prosperity relatively soon after the castle was slighted. Since Leicester Castle was repaired and reused the building remained focal to the south west of the city.

In their role as county towns, Bedford and Leicester shared an important place in the administration of their respective counties. In both cases rebellion against the king had dramatic results. It was highly unusual for the defences of a town to be slighted at the same time as those of the castle. At Bedford, greater proportions of material from the 12<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> centuries recovered from excavations indicated a stronger material economy. The implication is that even with the initial setback of the destruction of the gaol along with the castle, the town and its inhabitants continued to prosper. However, according to the returns of the 1334 Lay Subsidy it was valued at £196, making it only the fourth wealthiest town in Bedfordshire behind Luton, Leighton Buzzard, and Dunstable (Letters 2007). Meanwhile, the Subsidy for Leicestershire shows the county town continued to prosper and was the most economically important settlement in the county.

This shows that even when slighting was particularly vicious because of rebellion and personal disagreements between the rebel and person responsible for the slighting, the surrounding area could prosper. It does, however, seem likely that had these been towns of lesser status to begin with the slighting might have had a much more drastic impact. It is important to remember that the towns themselves were usually not the target of destruction. This may reflect why the evidence at Leicester indicates only a portion of the town wall was slighted. The punishment was not against the inhabitants of the city, but the earl of Leicester himself.

#### **7.4 Degannwy and Roxburgh – slighted royal castles**

The castles of Degannwy in Wales and Roxburgh in Scotland both experienced siege warfare and changed hands several times. They were high-status castles and had associated settlements. Though slighted two centuries apart, the extent to which the castles were demolished stands out, though this relates to the particular circumstances of the preceding sieges. In contrast to the sites discussed so far in this chapter, neither of the associated settlements now survives. The urban environment of Wales was significantly impacted by the English conquest in the 13<sup>th</sup> century with the foundation of new boroughs, on

occasion shifting focus from a previous social centre to a new location. This was the case at Degannwy, which was succeeded by Conwy in the 1280s, though at Roxburgh the burgh and castle co-existed for centuries before the castle was slighted. Both cases offer the opportunity to explore the impact on the landscape when a particularly high-status centre was destroyed.

Robert of Rhuddlan built a castle at Degannwy in the 11<sup>th</sup> century. Llywelyn the Great undertook building work in the early 13<sup>th</sup> century, and Henry III invested considerable sums in the castle between 1245 and 1250 when he spent £2,200 on work at the castle, repairing damage caused by Dafydd ap Llywelyn in 1241 (Alcock 1968, 190–192, 196). The known history of the castle indicates this was one of three destructive episodes at Degannwy. The demolition events in 1210 and 1241 were both undertaken by the Welsh princes who at the time controlled the castle and reportedly damaged it in the face of an English advance. The third, in 1263, was also carried out by a Welsh prince, but this time after the castle had been besieged and captured from the English (RCAHMW 1956, 152–154). The archaeological evidence includes a destruction phase, but this relates to 1263.

By this time a settlement had been established and Degannwy received its charter as a borough on 21<sup>st</sup> February 1252. The charter also gave the burgesses permission to surround the borough with a ditch and wall, and hold an annual fair and a weekly market (Charter Roll 36 Henry III, M 19; quoted by Lowe 1912, 421). Some uncertainty surrounds the precise location of the settlement. The RCAHMW (1956, 154) noted that earthworks to north of the castle bailey may represent the vestigial remains of the settlement, while the National Monument Record identifies possible areas both north and south of the castle (Wiles 2004; Wiles 2008). Though discussed in Soulsby's (1983, 63) survey of Welsh medieval towns, it was not included in the gazetteer due to insufficient information about the extent of the settlement. The difficulty in ascertaining the location of the settlement is the result of a lack of investigation into the surrounding landscape. As the settlement beyond the castle walls no longer survives, it would be easy though not necessarily correct to assume that it was a direct result of the slighting of 1263. The present state of knowledge allows for no more than speculation as to whether the Welsh damaged the town, however the fortune of the town over the following years charts a clear pattern of decline as nearby Conwy was given preference.

In 1254 Henry III gave the land he controlled between Chester and Conwy including Degannwy Castle to his son, Prince Edward. The 24-year-old prince was not present when the Welsh besieged Degannwy in 1263, and though he set out to relieve the castle Edward did not arrive in time (Lowe 1912, 181–182). Soulsby (1983, 21–23) compiled information on the numbers of burgesses and taxpayers in 77 Welsh towns around 1300. Of these, twenty had fewer than 30 burgesses; Degannwy fell within this group and is considered a 'small urban community'. Modern estimates place the population at around 100 (Soulsby 1983, 21–23). While the slighting of the castle would have disrupted activity in the surrounding area, especially because of the small size of the settlement, it was still in use in 1290 when its market was recorded (Letters 2007). However, the development of Conwy as an English borough and castle had a profound effect on the area. By 1284, work had begun on establishing Conwy, an English castle borough, a mile and a quarter south of Degannwy (Lilley, Lloyd & Trick 2005, 42). The creation of the borough, with more powers for the burgesses than given to those at Degannwy (Lowe 1912, 181), shifted the focus of the surrounding area. The new settlement was in a low-lying area, making access easier than to uphill Degannwy, while the creation of a quay along with the borough facilitated trade.

Despite spending considerable time under Henry III's control, Degannwy Castle was closely associated with Llywelyn the Great. When the Welsh slighted the castle in 1263 they treated a carving of his head with respect and placed it carefully in the ground face-down while the rest of the castle was torn down. By founding a new borough, Edward I was physically and symbolically separating the people of Wales from their past and a figure who had stood against the English. It also had the effect of distancing Edward from the events of 1263 in which he was unable to prevent the Welsh from capturing the castle. The fact that Conwy's borough flourished means we can infer the settlement at Degannwy was diminished – if not by the time the borough was founded, then the drastically changed landscape would have further contributed to the withering of Degannwy. When Beaumaris was founded in 1296 the inhabitants of the nearby settlement of Llanfaes were encouraged to move to the foundation of New Borough (Lilley, Lloyd & Trick 2005, 77). Llanfaes has been an economic centre and a key port but in 1303 the sheriff remarked that all the shipping called at Beaumaris rather than Llanfaes (RCAHM 1937: clxxii). When

it served the economic needs of a new borough, the crown had few qualms about dispersing an already established trading centre. This was arguably one of the most powerful expressions of lordship: not only could the king create, but he could dismantle as he saw fit – and on a large scale. Had Degannwy been in a strong economic position, there is little doubt Edward would have taken steps to ensure the success of Conwy. To facilitate the construction of the castle at Conwy, a pre-existing monastery – patronised by Llywelyn the Great and the mausoleum of the princes of Gwynedd (Robinson 1998, 64) – was moved to Maenan seven miles to the south. The act of moving a monastic community for the sake a castle was rare; it was far more common with castles and monasteries to be founded together, with 170 sites in England and Wales fitting with this pattern (Thompson 1986, 306–307; Williams 2001, 13). This created a nucleus of secular and religious power in the area, so the different approach at Degannwy needs to be explained. As Degannwy Castle was linked to Llywelyn so was the monastery; this thesis proposes that this was the main reason for relocating the monastic community and mausoleum. It was an additional step in distancing the memory of Llywelyn the Great. When Owain Glendower rebelled against English rule in 1400 he asserted his dynastic links to the Welsh princes to give himself legitimacy. In the late 13<sup>th</sup> century Edward I recognised the potential for Llywelyn the Great’s property to become an emblem of Welsh identity, and potentially be used to subvert the new English rule. The abandonment of the castle was heavily influenced by the memory of Llywelyn the Great, and the same consideration drastically changed the surrounding landscape by moving the most significant ecclesiastic foundation nearby.

Interestingly, while Llywelyn’s castle and monastic community were removed one way or another, his hall in Conwy was incorporated into the new town. The Exchequer Rolls for 1300–1301 mentioned that the hall had been repaired in 1296. Goodall (2011, 217–218) suggests that this was an ‘architectural trophy of war’. While this is plausible I suggest that the situation was more complex, especially as the hall was dismantled in 1316 and the timbers taken to Caernarfon Castle (GAT 2017a). This has parallels with Dolbadarn Castle, built by Llywelyn the Great: in 1283 Dolbadarn was the final castle to be captured in Edward’s conquest of Wales and two years later timbers from the castle were removed for use at Caernarfon Castle (Taylor 1997, 9; Avent 2010, 20). This brings together two important themes, the need



for continuity in administration (discussed in Chapter 6) and the repurposing of material culture to subvert original meanings and imposing new contexts (discussed in Chapter 7.3 and Chapter 8.5.1). As previously discussed, the archaeological evidence indicates that within castles great halls were typically excluded from slighting. This is likely because such halls played an important part in local administration, and while the castle might be damaged continuity was sometimes needed to ensure the stability of the area. That would explain why Llywelyn's hall at Conwy was left intact. In short it was needed for local administration immediately after the conquest of Wales. However, more than 20 years after the conquest the hall's administrative function was no longer needed. This gave Edward II the opportunity to demolish the structure and by reusing its materials in Caernarfon Castle it symbolically completed the transition of Wales as an independent kingdom into one subject to English rule. Buildings which could have been symbols of Welsh resistance, creating a romantic recent past, were directly incorporated into the greatest symbol of their subjugation.

While the settlement of Conwy prospered, Degannwy did not remain populated for long. Creighton and Higham (2005, 82) suggest the desertion of many castle boroughs was due to economic factors, specifically Dinefwr, Dolforwyn, Cefnlllys, Kucklas, Castell y Bere, Painscastle, and Degannwy. Certainly, the evidence suggests Degannwy was a diminished economic force in its landscape. The royal castle evidently underpinned the fortunes of the borough; with the slighting of the castle, the uphill location of the settlement would have been much less attractive than a site on lower ground and easier to access. At Denbigh (Denbighshire) the borough founded in the late 13<sup>th</sup> century on the side of a hill eventually migrated further down the slope where access was easier (Creighton & Higham 2005, 28). In that instance the castle was still present, so at Degannwy the decline of the borough can be traced to the slighting of the castle, exacerbated by the creation of Conwy as an economic, administrative, and military centre.

In contrast to Degannwy, where the precise location of the town is uncertain, at Roxburgh (Fig. 7.7) not only is the extent of the site known but geophysical survey demonstrated the settlement was laid out in a grid plan (Wessex Archaeology 2004, 4). In the late 1970s archaeologists were advocating the importance and potential of research at Roxburgh (Brooks 1977,

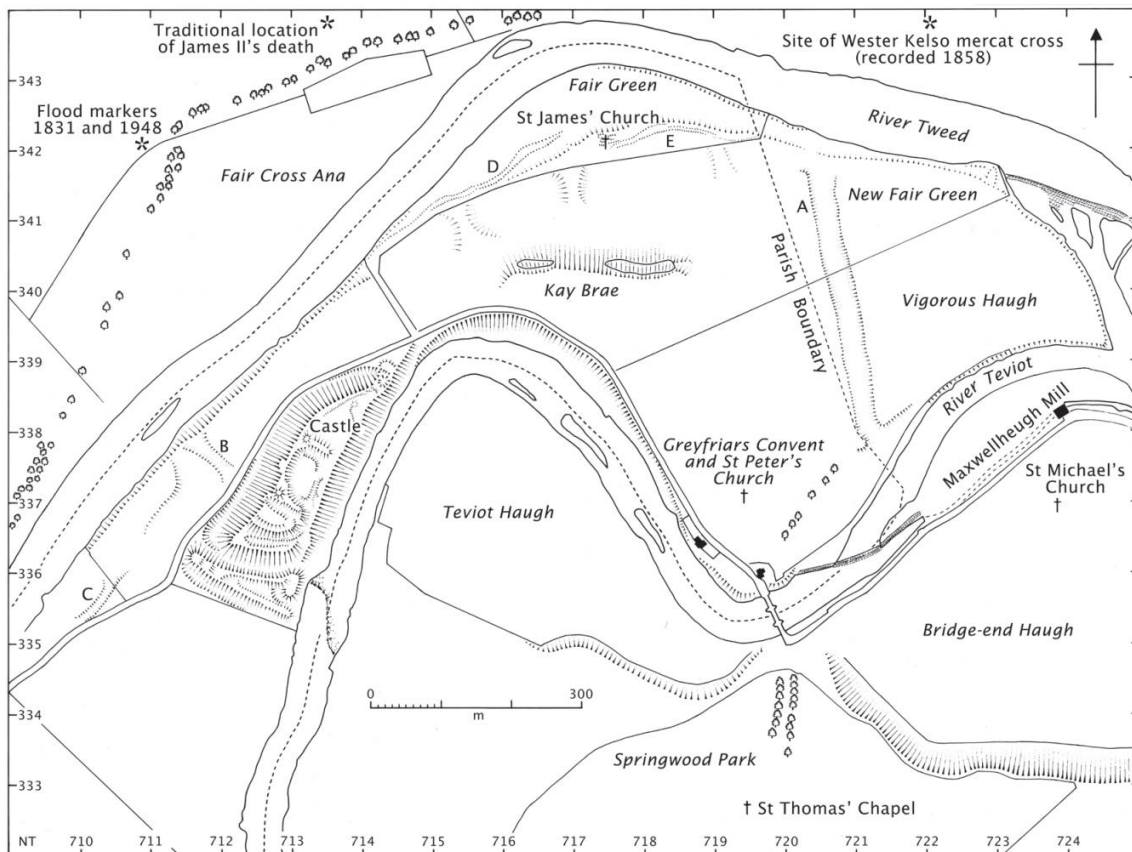


Fig. 7.7. A plan of Roxburgh Castle, with the burgh to the northeast at the confluence of the rivers Tweed and Teviot. From Martin & Oram 2007, 361.

30). Despite being a high-status site and a major settlement, the only time Roxburgh was excavated was in 2003 and even then only on a small-scale (Wessex Archaeology 2004, 7). The trial excavations carried out by Wessex Archaeology found that the burgh had been ploughed, accounting for a lack of occupation and demolition layers (Wessex Archaeology 2004, 11). Trench 1 across the eastern defences of the burgh found that the ditch fills consisted of silts rather than deliberate filling (Wessex Archaeology 2004, 12). The majority of the pottery discovered during excavation dated to the medieval period (4,543g out of 4,818g), with a much smaller amount from the post-medieval period (275g) (Wessex Archaeology 2004, 18). With an excavated area of 250m<sup>2</sup> – less than 1% of the site (Wessex Archaeology 2004, 23) – any conclusions can be no more than equivocal. However, the evidence so far indicates the burgh at Roxburgh went out of use in the post-medieval period, while the defences were not slighted. As seen in this chapter so far it was uncommon for a town's defences to be slighted along with the castle, though with such small-scale investigation it is possible that the evidence remains undiscovered.

As such a small area of the site was examined extrapolating the entire fate of the site is problematic. However, contemporary documents complement the archaeology. In the 12<sup>th</sup> century, Roxburgh Castle was the main seat of King David I of Scotland, and naturally the associated burgh benefitted greatly. Complementing this natural focus, Kelso Abbey was founded nearby (Martin & Oram 2007, 377). Situated close the Anglo-Scottish border, both castle and burgh changed hands several times and suffered repeated raids and sacking. Though initially resilient, from the late 14<sup>th</sup> century onwards the town went into steady decline. Economic factors such as growing competition in the wool trade were significant contributing factors (Martin & Oram 2007, 378–379). It is apparent the slighting of the castle came at a time when the burgh itself was in decline. The continued existence of the burgh at the time of the siege of 1460 can be inferred from royal charters which refer to property holdings there in the middle of the century. Though a friary remained at Roxburgh until it was burnt in 1542, as early as 1477 a grant from James III gave ‘all the perches, bounds, and burgage fermes of the ... burgh of Roxburgh, together with all the fishings, water, and water passages and the old *le fereis* of the said burgh’ to the Franciscan convent at Roxburgh (Martin & Oram 2007, 379). The extent of the grant indicates that the burgh essentially lay abandoned.

The emerging narrative is that by the siege of 1460 Roxburgh was a town in recession. It had previously experienced royal patronage from both the English and Scottish crowns, but fell on severely hard times. The account of the siege does not mention the burgh, and the grant, 17 years later, indicates Roxburgh was deserted. Perhaps Roxburgh was already deserted by 1460, but the continued royal charters of this period mentioning property within the burgh would suggest otherwise. Instead the conclusion is that the cataclysmic events of 1460, which resulted in the violent death of James II when one of his cannons exploded, led the final abandonment of the burgh. The available evidence suggests the Scottish force that slighted the castle had left the burgh alone; other occasions on which either the Scottish or English had raided the town and set it alight are recorded, so it would be an odd oversight in the chronicles not to mention it had it taken place. This fits with the pattern at most of the urban castles examined: the settlement itself was not directly damaged, but the removal of the castle negatively affected the town. In this case, Roxburgh’s fortunes were already at a nadir with economic competition from

elsewhere, repeated raiding, and governance issues, the destruction of the castle was enough to seal the fate of the burgh. With the castle gone, with it went the large garrison and the economic activity it supported. As the wool trade was already shifting elsewhere, this would have been an opportune moment for tradesmen to look elsewhere not just for business but for security as the castle no longer offered protection.

### 7.5 Ludgershall and Dryslwyn

What links Ludgershall and Dryslwyn is not the trajectory of either castle but the relative status of each castle and town. While Ludgershall Castle was rebuilt after it was slighted in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, being dismantled in the 15<sup>th</sup> century was the closing chapter of Dryslwyn's history. Whereas the town of Ludgershall grew and became a borough in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, Dryslwyn's settlement was completely abandoned and is now a green site. However, both were mid-ranking towns: not county towns but larger than villages. What this can show is how the differing fates of the castles can be reflected in the different fortunes of the towns nearby.

The first excavations in the town of Ludgershall were undertaken in 1964 and focused on the castle. Since then the archaeological investigations have primarily consisted of evaluations and watching briefs. In addition, an earthwork survey was carried out in relation to the castle in 1998 (McMahon 2004, 4). Therefore, while the castle's development is well understood as a result of excavations that of the town is comparatively poor. It is important to remember the likely context for the slighting of Ludgershall Castle is that the owner joined the rebellion against Henry II in 1173–74. Though the slighting was not recorded in contemporary documents, Henry II demolished several castles belonging to rebels and the pottery evidence indicates the destruction at

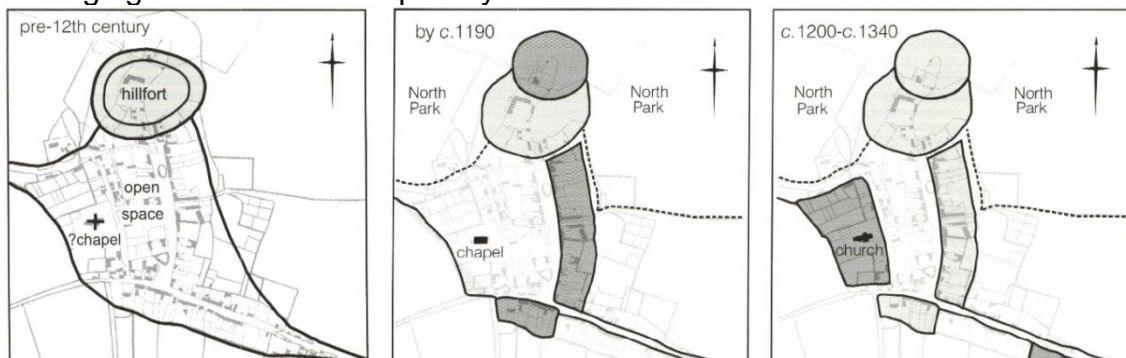


Fig. 7.8. Suggested development of Ludgershall. Grey shading represents areas constructed during each phase. From Everson 2000, 112–113.

Ludgershall took place in the second half of the 12<sup>th</sup> century and was ‘imposing royal order’ (Ellis 2000b, 248). This element of asserting royal authority holds the key to the development of the landscape. At the time of the demolition, the area south of the castle was an open area with a chapel serving a small community developing beyond the castle (Everson 2000, 111). By 1194, a borough had been established at Ludgershall. This provides a framework for the development of the site, and an L-shaped layout of burgage plots has been identified, albeit partially obscured by 14<sup>th</sup>-century developments (Fig. 7.8). While the town did not flourish, it remained as a stable size throughout the medieval period (Everson 2000, 106–111).

This is all placed within the wider landscape context of the creation of two parks, North Park which abutted the north enclosure of the castle, and South Park to the south east of the town (Fig. 7.9). It is uncertain when these parks were created, but they probably existed by the 13<sup>th</sup> century. The close relationship between the rebuilt castle and the North Park suggests the two developments were contemporaneous (Everson 2000, 104–105). While the South Park was a hunting enclosure, the North Park may have been more ornamental as its elongated shape, intruded into by the castle, was unusual for a hunting park. The park’s boundary is 400m north of the castle, and obscured by a downward slope towards a valley, thus giving the impression when viewed from the north enclosure of the castle that the park extended further than it really did: ‘In every respect ... its relationship to the topography shows this park

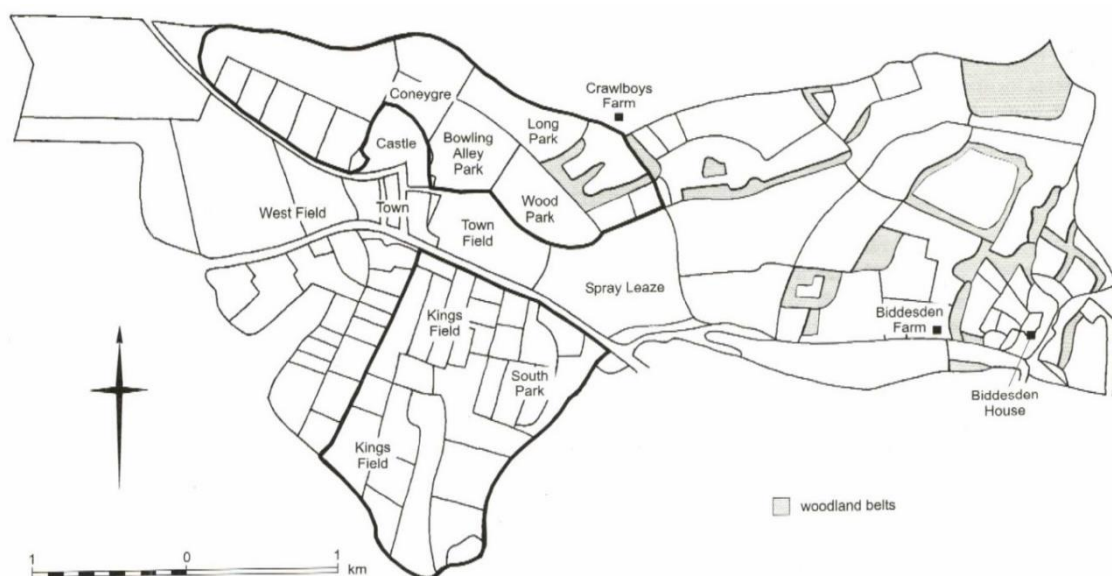


Fig. 7.9. The parish of Ludgershall, with parks to the north and south of the medieval town. From Everson 2000, 105.



to be a landscape designed at one with the castle's North Enclosure' (Everson 2000, 105).

The destruction and rebuilding of Ludgershall Castle was mirrored in the landscape. Whatever habitation existed before was replaced by a borough, while to the north and south parks were created for leisure. The close relationship between the north park and the castle's north enclosure, which was given a new great tower and domestic buildings c. 1190 (Ellis 2000b, 248), suggests it dates to the rebuild of the castle rather than the previous phase. Overall the impression is of an emphatic statement of royal power. First the castle was torn down, then it was renewed along with the surrounding landscape, with high-status parks and a borough, marking the settlement as one of importance in the landscape context if not economically. This takeover of power and renewal of the castle and landscape context is unparalleled in the previous examples and typically slighting is not followed by a concerted effort to rebuild by the same person who carried out the destructive act.

The origins of the town at Dryslwyn are obscure (Fig. 7.11), but it is one of just a small number of abandoned castle boroughs that have undergone extensive excavation (Creighton & Higham 2005, 81). It should, however, be noted that some of the stratigraphy has eroded and datable artefacts were uncommon, meaning that tying the chronology of the site to the historical narrative is difficult (Caple 2007, 219). The castle was founded by the Welsh and the town was mentioned in the *Brut y Tywysogion* (Soulsby 1983, 133). The

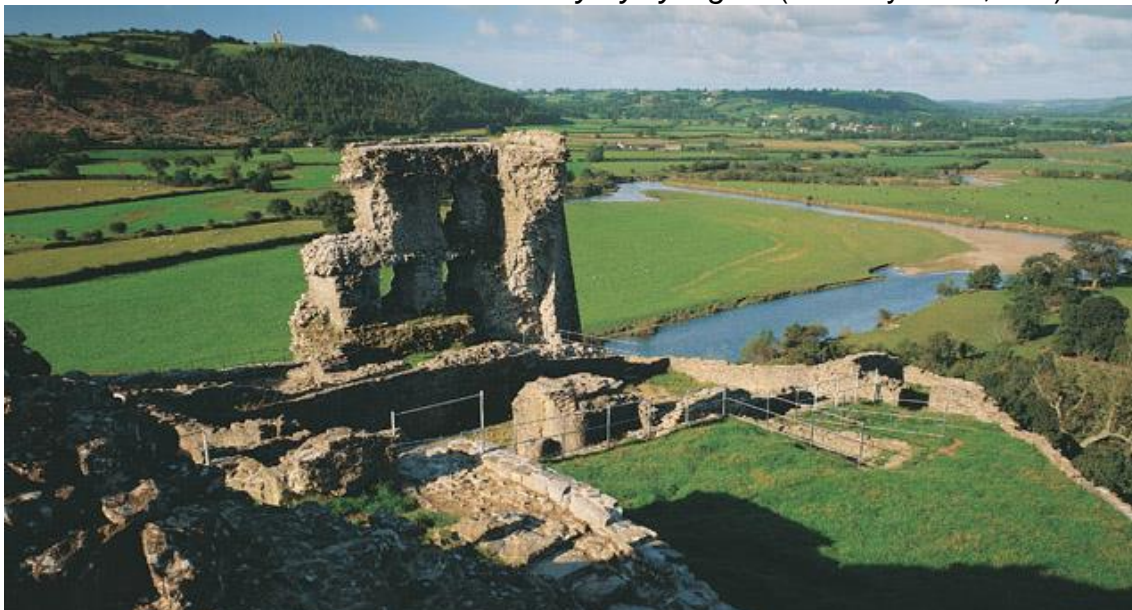


Fig. 7.10. View west from Dryslwyn Castle. The river flows east-west past the castle, and the town was located to the north. Image courtesy of Cadw under the Open Government Licence 1.0.

town and former castle are on a hill on the northern bank of the River Afon Tywi (Fig. 7.10). A total of 43 burgages were recorded by the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century and 47 in 1360, indicating a degree of economic stability (Soulsby 1983, 133). Outbreaks of the Black Death in 1361 and 1369 in Wales are likely to have reduced the town's population (Caple 2007, 218). Soulsby (1983, 133–134) suggested the lack of references to Dryslwyn after 1403 indicates the town was destroyed during the Glendower rebellion. In the previous towns considered so far, damage to the settlement has mostly been incidental, with the focus of efforts on the castle's fortifications. However, the Glendower rebellion poses a different social context which may challenge this pattern.

Unusually, the archaeological evidence suggests the limestone town walls at Dryslwyn were deliberately demolished. When the castle was slighted, hinges were removed from its inner gatehouse and the same can be seen at the gatehouse for the town walls. The rubble core of the gatehouse walls was overlain by layers of rubble and soil, indicating the demolition of this area took longer than at the castle, and may have consisted of several stages. In contrast soil was absent from the demolition deposits within the castle, showing that at the town's gatehouse more time elapsed between deposition of rubble spreads (Caple 2007, 84, 225). While the town defences were slighted along with the

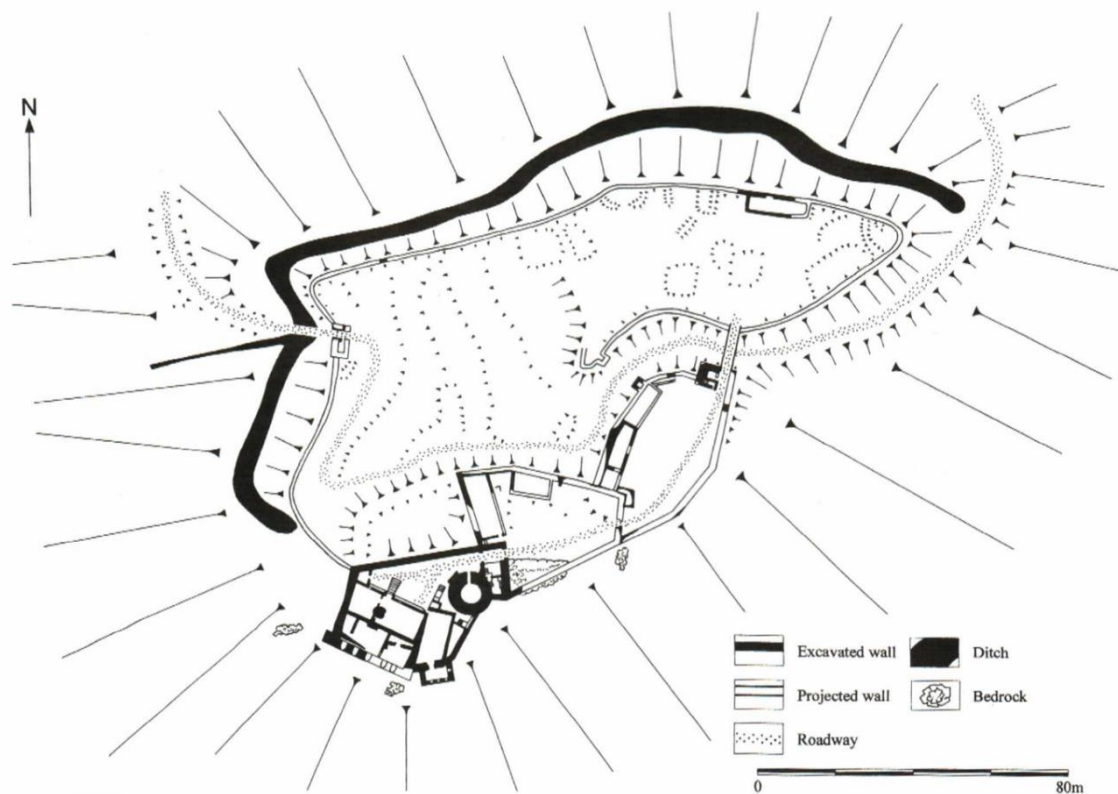


Fig. 7.11. The layout of Dryslwyn Castle and its associated town from Caple 2007, 228.

castle, the castle was the key focus of those carrying out the work. The multiple events represented in the archaeological record may indicate locals reusing stone once it became clear that the castle and town defences would not be repaired, signalling the terminal decline of Dryslwyn. It also suggests the town defences were not as extensively damaged as the castle itself, which is consistent with the emphasis on slighting the castle rather than punishing the inhabitants of the associated town.

The northwest part of the town wall and ditch was sectioned, and it was discovered that a considerable amount of rubble had been deposited in the ditch. The conclusion from the excavators was that the town wall's facing stone had been robbed out, and then the rubble core pushed into the ditch (Caple 2007, 222–223). This second step is important as filling the ditch was explicitly an act of slighting. Dryslwyn had a complicated identity as though the town and castle were founded by the Welsh, it had been expanded by the English under Edward I and English surnames were predominant amongst the 14<sup>th</sup> century inhabitants. A consequence of Glendower's rebellion was that Welshmen were prohibited from owning land or high public office within English boroughs. For Dryslwyn, a town that had entered a period of decline and its castle systematically slighted, this closed off one route for improving the town's fortunes. The town charter was reconfirmed in 1444, which indicates the settlement still persisted even after the tumultuous effects of plague and rebellion (Caple 2007, 218–219). The ultimate decline of the borough supports the assertion by Creighton and Higham (2005, 81) that Dryslwyn borough had 'no significant life independent of the castle'.

## **7.6 Framlingham and Wareham – castles of the 12<sup>th</sup> century**

As detailed in the previous chapters, the castles of Framlingham and Wareham were both slighted in the 12<sup>th</sup> century during or shortly after civil wars: Wareham in relation to 'the Anarchy', fought between Stephen and Matilda, and Framlingham after the owner joined the 1173–74 rebellion against Henry II. Importantly, both castles were rebuilt: Wareham through royal patronage and Framlingham through the work of Roger Bigod, Earl of Norfolk (Alexander 2007, 20). Both settlements originated as early medieval towns, so might reasonably be expected to continue as economic centres into the Norman and later medieval period. The question becomes whether the temporary destruction of



the castle can be demonstrated to have had a discernible impact on their associated towns, or whether the rebuilding meant that the towns were able to function much as they had previously.

Wareham originated as an early medieval burgh, was an important port, and contained a royal mint. By 1066 it had 285 houses, making it the largest town in Dorset. Emphasising the town's importance even more, it was the burial place of two early medieval kings: Brihtric and Edward (Bellamy & Davey 2011, 26, 29–31). However, the century after the Norman Conquest saw a marked decline in the town's fortunes. Wareham Castle's great tower was slighted in the 12<sup>th</sup> century though other parts of the castle continued in use (Renn 1960, 56, 60). This event most likely took place in the context of 'the Anarchy'. The town changed hands several times during the civil war, including one event in 1142 when King Stephen plundered the town when he captured the castle (Bellamy & Davey 2011, 29). With Wareham slighted, Corfe became the most important castle in the county and received considerable royal investment.

In the period 1154–1158 there were nearly 50 mints in England, and the last coins minted at Wareham date to 1147–1149 (Bellamy & Davey 2011, 29; Allen 2012, 41). The closure of the mint cannot be simply attributed to the slighting of the castle. Henry II reduced the number of mints in the country to just nine as part of a plan to exercise greater control over coinage (Allen 2012, 41). However, it does still show that one of the institutions that marked Wareham as an important town was removed. Wareham became a royal possession through marriage in 1189, and King John repaired the castle in 1207, but in the period between the castle's destruction and restoration Corfe Castle had emerged as a key fortification in the county and high-status site. While King John would sometimes stay at Wareham Castle, it was usually as a staging post on his travels to and from Corfe. Economically the town suffered from the 13<sup>th</sup> century onwards due to competition with Poole. The river which ran through the south of the town had begun to silt up, and provided a strong incentive for trade to go elsewhere (Bellamy & Davey 2011, 33). Undoubtedly this would have happened regardless of the castle's fate. Excavations in the 1950s found the town wall had been robbed out; pottery evidence indicated this took place in the late 12<sup>th</sup> or early 13<sup>th</sup> century (Farrar 1956, 86). The fact that this is later than the suggested destruction of the castle in the mid-12<sup>th</sup> century would indicate a period of neglect and disrepair exploited by the local populace,

rather than a deliberate decision to slight the town walls as part of a wider programme of destruction.

The story of Wareham is not that of a town whose fortune was dependant on the success of the castle. It is likely the initial imposition of the castle resulted in significant destruction of property as it occupied a densely populated area (Bellamy & Davey 2011, 29). Instead the slighting of the castle was one of a series of episodes which contributed to the long-term decline of Wareham.

Etymologically the name Framlingham derives from Old English, and while there was likely early medieval activity at Framlingham it was unlikely to have taken an urban form until the Norman period (Alexander 2007, 6, 12–13). Between 1066 and 1086 the value of Framlingham increased from £16 to £36, leading Ridgard (1985, 2, cited in Alexander 2007) to suggest this reflects a dramatic change in economic activity with the establishment of a market – though none was documented until 1270 (Alexander 2007, 14–16, 35). Framlingham Castle, built in the late 11<sup>th</sup> or early 12<sup>th</sup> century was part of an ornamental landscape, with a mere contemporaneous to the early castle, and parks for hunting (Fig. 7.12) (Alexander 2007, 24). For much of the 12<sup>th</sup> century, the fortunes of the town of Framlingham have to be inferred from later sources. The town was granted borough status in 1286 and was allowed to hold a market on three days a week, including Saturday. Saturday was the most profitable day for a market so demonstrates that even at this late stage, more than a century after the castle was slighted, Framlingham was an established and important town (Alexander 2007, 35). This might also support the theory that the market had been established around the time of the Domesday Survey. The Great Park is assumed to have originated in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, around the time the castle was created, but was not documented until 1270 (Alexander 2007, 26). Overall the available evidence from Framlingham suggests the town was not negatively affected by the slighting of the castle. If it had been, it recovered to such an extent that by the 1334 Lay Subsidy it was valued at £55 which was close to Suffolk's average (Alexander 2007, 35).

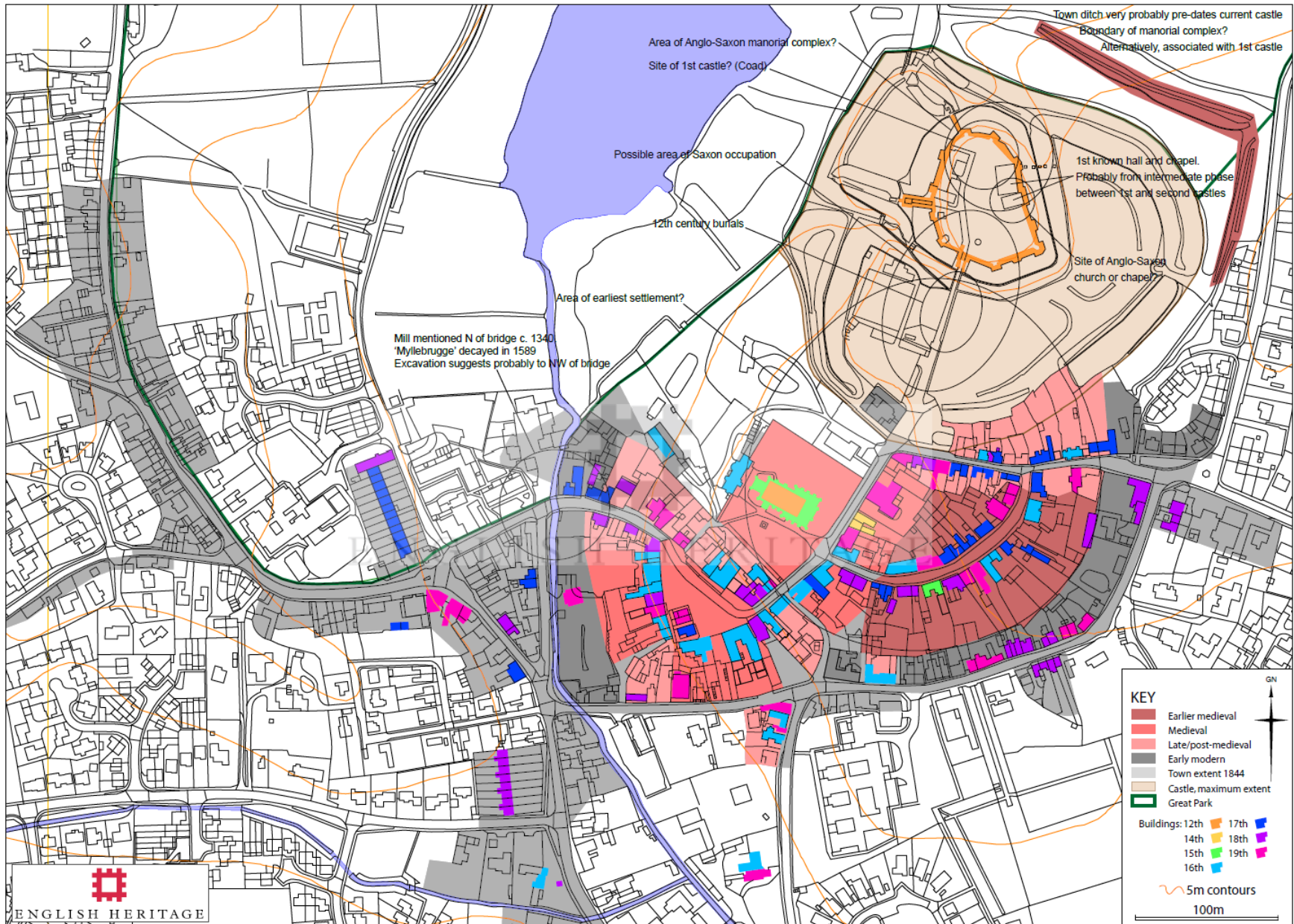


Fig. 7.12. A phased development plan of Framlingham. From Alexander 2007, 63.

## 7.7 Conclusion

This chapter set out to examine the link between castles and their associated towns and to assess the impact of castle slighting on urban centres. It used archaeological evidence to establish whether towns were included in the destruction, how they developed or changed after a castle was slighted, to what extent building materials were reused, and how the local administration was affected.

The ten sites discussed in this chapter are widely separated in terms of both chronology and geography. One slighted town and castle pairing is in Scotland, two in Wales, and the rest England. Two examples date from each of the 12<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries, and the rest from the 12<sup>th</sup> century. This presents its own challenges as each town has a differing history and biography, perhaps continuing to expand, making it difficult to identify earlier phases of archaeology, or entering a period of decline which may be difficult to attribute to a single factor.

The key finding of this chapter is that the towns themselves were rarely directly targeted for destruction. The entry for Leicester's town walls in *Castellarium Anglicanum* noted 'The slighting of a town is certainly remarkable, and the walls never seem to have been rebuilt.' (King 1983a, 258). The evidence here has lent weight to this assertion, meaning that cases where a town was slighted should be considered rare and highly significant. Aside from Leicester only Dryslwyn presented evidence for the town defences having been slighted. This may be partly because only a minority of castles were located in urban centres, and only a minority of slighted castles were located within towns. However, the low rate of incidence suggests other factors. While tax from trade within towns contributed to a lord's wealth, the town itself and town walls were not as closely associated with the lord as the castles themselves. Distinctions between 'private' and 'public' when it comes to castles and town walls may not always be helpful, but in this instance the obvious conclusion is that slighting a castle may have hurt the prestige of an individual, but slighting a town would have hurt a wider population. It was a blunt tool, which helps explain why it was not used when it would affect the general populace. Particularly when in most of the cases examined the slighting would have come at the order of the king. For instance, while Henry III was so eager to punish Faulkes de Bréauté he undermined Bedford as a centre of administration by destroying the prison

within the castle, he was attempting to subdue a rebel and send a warning to others who might oppose him during the early part of his reign. Extending this act of retribution to the town of Bedford itself would have caused popular unrest. This is in marked contrast the sacking of towns during war in which an aggressive force would inflict severe damage on a settlement and its populace. This is because of the different contexts and motivations: as seen here the slighting was primarily carried out by trying to reassert their authority. Causing suffering to those you are meant to rule and protect was not an effective way of maintaining power.

The sacking of Caernarfon in 1294 is not discussed in this chapter because of only limited archaeological evidence on which to assess the impact of this event. That year Madog ap Llywelyn led the Welsh in revolt against English rule and burned the town and castle of Caernarfon. The 14<sup>th</sup>-century *Chronicle of Walter of Guisborough* records that the Welsh demolished the town walls ('*demolientes muros*') (*Chronicle of Walter of Guisborough*, ed. Rothwell 1957, 250). The HER indicates that very little excavation has taken place within the town (GAT 2017b). What little excavation has taken place has provided only limited medieval material (Lilley, Lloyd & Trick 2005, 35). Therefore, Caernarfon provides an interesting comparison for Dryslwyn as both towns were experienced destruction as a result of Welsh rejection of English rule, albeit the former carried out by the Welsh and the latter by the English at the end of the rebellion. This suggests that when a town was deliberately included in destruction it was because it was not from the same culture as those perpetrating the act. Unlike with a ruler attempting to reassert their authority, rebellions were much less concerned with perceptions of legitimacy by avoiding destructive acts which harmed a larger population. However, Caernarfon's castle and town walls have been so substantially repaired since 1294 that it is difficult to assess how extensive the damage was, and indeed how extensive the putative burning of the town was.

Of the sites considered only Framlingham is likely to have been part of an ornamental landscape at the time of its slighting. Here the limited evidence available suggests the landscape was left untouched. This should not necessarily be taken as evidence that the king who ordered the destruction of the castle was unconcerned with the landscape, but is perhaps confirmation that it was secondary to the castle itself. There may have been a consideration

of resources as extending the destruction beyond the castle walls to the landscape would have magnified the labour required. In the Peasants' Revolt, as will be discussed in the following chapter, there are notable instances in which people trespassed onto another's land or carried out ritualised hunting of a rival's game animals. This was considerably easier than wholesale destruction of the landscape while still conveying the message that the previous lord's power was being subverted. In contrast, at Ludgershall the creation of an ornamental landscape when the castle was rebuilt by the king served to completely override the previous owner's castle. Links with the previous owner were a consideration when choosing to replace Degannwy Castle with Conwy just over a mile away. Easier access to the river and sea and direct control of territory and transport routes likely contributed to choosing a lowland site over the hilltop on which Degannwy had been built, but avoiding physical and psychological association of the site with Llywelyn ap Gruffydd.

Direct destruction focusses on the castle – very rarely does it extend even into the immediate landscape. The impact on the surrounding area for better or worse was incidental, whether to the wider landscape or the adjacent town. Slighting was an act designed to undermine the authority of a secular lord not the economic prosperity of his holdings. That would explain why some castles were allowed to be rebuilt: the act of slighting was the key in diminishing their social status, while later building might be permitted if circumstances have changed and the person or their family has come back into favour. Very large towns, such as Bedford and Leicester, continued as centres of their county's economy and administration showing the resilience of the local economy independent of the castle, and showing how important these towns were as existing foci. However, Pleshey and Saffron Walden were significantly smaller settlements that demonstrably suffered from the slighting of their respective castles. The intention of Geoffrey de Mandeville in these two cases appears to have been to create profitable towns, but the blow of removing the castle and indeed removing him as lord undermined the performance of each settlement. Even when utterly demolished, such as at Bedford, town layouts continued to respect the outline of the castle. The likeliest explanation is that it was simply easier to build elsewhere in the town because the land was private.

When a town entered a period of decline after the castle was slighted, often it was one contributing factor out of several. It was not uncommon for

defended settlements to decline and either shrink or become abandoned as was the case at Lydford (Devon) and Trelech (Monmouthshire) (Creighton & Higham 2005, 28). At Wareham for instance the destruction of the castle contributed to the growing importance of Corfe Castle, but the silting up of the harbour was ultimately the key consideration in the fate of the town. In the 15<sup>th</sup> century when urbanism in Wales was in decline, the destruction at Dryslwyn caused by the English contributed to the demise of the town. At Roxburgh the burgh was already in steady decline by the mid-15<sup>th</sup> century due to economic competition, but the slighting of the castle accelerated the depopulation of this one powerful settlement.

Castles and towns shared a complex relationship. While castles could foster towns and lead to economic investment, the effect of castle slighting could not be accurately predicted. It depends on a variety of factors: size of the town, whether the castle was subsequently rebuilt, competition with other trading centres, and wider trends in urbanism. In some cases, the removal of the castle has led to a change in focus in the wider landscape as was the case at Degannwy and Wareham. Typically, though, the assumption is that the destruction of a castle would have had a negative impact on its associated settlement. While this is often the case, for Ludgershall this was the precursor to a substantial remoulding of the landscape. A borough was established south of the castle and parks to the north. This is an exception as it involved direct investment of resources from the king. Most towns that have their castle slighted do not benefit from these circumstances. Castle slighting certainly had the potential to negatively impact the development of an urban centre.

## Chapter 8 – The lordly medieval landscape and slighting

[You] Dispark'd my parks and fell'd my forest woods,  
From my own windows torn my household coat,  
Razed out my imprese, leaving me no sign,  
Save men's opinions and my living blood,  
To show the world I am a gentleman.

*Richard II*, Act 3 scene 1–Shakespeare 1597

### 8.1 Introduction

The influence of lordship projected beyond the castle walls. It is particularly obvious in the form of parks, watery landscapes, dovecots, and rabbit warrens but even more mundane aspects of lordship conveyed a message. A productive and well-run manor with mills, barns, and pastures the lord of the manor was establishing his mastery over nature (Liddiard 2005, 118). This extended to urban contexts, as seen in the last chapter, where towns could be reordered to accommodate castles (Fradley 2011, 39–40), and markets and boroughs established in the shadow of the castle. As this chapter will demonstrate the landscape would sometimes be deliberately targeted. In the same way that castle slighting blends military and social meanings, committing acts of destruction in the wider landscape could also be undertaken for a variety of reasons, often at the same time. For example, adopting a scorched earth approach was an established part of medieval warfare. An oath given by a bishop to the Frankish king in 1023 includes a promise not to steal or kill animals associated with agriculture, not to destroy vineyards or mills, and not destroy houses unless they sheltered an enemy or thieves and even then they had to be 'joined to a real castle' (Strickland 1996, 258; trans. Smail & Gibson 2009, 301–302). Non-combatants were supposed to be protected from conflict, and waging war on the land could have devastating effects on the inhabitants as their food sources were destroyed. In practice this was often ignored especially in wars between nations, though in the case of civil wars leaders might be deterred by the prospect of harming the people they claimed the right to rule. While the practicality of making it more difficult for an enemy to gather provisions is evident, often the act of destruction would be used to undermine the authority of



the lords who could not protect their land. By attacking lands held directly by a lord as opposed to those they claimed, it proved they were incapable of taking care of people who depended on them and thereby fulfilling the obligations of lordship.

Previous chapters have examined what happened to castles when they were slighted and how this affected the surrounding area. However, in some cases either a castle could not be taken or it was decided not to attack it at all. This left the landscape as a symbol of lordship, which was undefended and easier to disrupt. Castles were a central point in the administrative landscape, as demonstrated by the Assize of Northampton in 1176 which dictated that if someone suspected of stealing could not be taken to the sheriff, then they were to be conveyed to the nearest castle and held there (Pugh 1955, 9). The castle was the focus of authority, both real and symbolic, while the landscape represented the extension of the lord's power. Depending on who carried out the act damaging these attributes of lordship could have been an extension of slighting – especially when both sides were led by nobility – or a form of resistance analogous to park breaking – particularly when the party inflicting the damage consisted of the lower end of the social scale.

From the first stages of the Norman Conquest, destruction was used as a tool to undermine the authority of the property owner and establish the supremacy of the one perpetrating the act. William the Conqueror raided lands held by King Harold, as depicted in the Bayeux Tapestry (Strickland 1996, 278). It was a statement that if Harold could not protect his demesne, then he could not protect England. This is particularly important as William was asserting his claim to the crown against Harold. By demonstrating his superiority over Harold, William was enhancing his role as a leader. This bears considerable similarities to the *chevauchée*, a raid into enemy territory. The tactic of the *chevauchée* has typically been addressed by historians of the Hundred Years' War, rather than earlier in the Middle Ages (Strickland 1996, 259). The concept, however, is transferable. It served several purposes: a war of attrition and political destabilisation, and in the view of some historians, drawing an opponent into combat (Rogers 1999, 266–267). An attack on the lord's property or on those whom the lord was meant to protect would have incited a reaction. To do otherwise would have been to appear weak, giving the transgressor licence to continue their acts. However, if direct reprisal in the form of meeting them in

battle was not an option, as was the cases with the Peasants' Revolt of 1381, alternative methods of restoring the social order were used, particularly taking cases to court. In financial terms, the destruction caused during peasant uprisings was one-sided with landowners potentially suffering great losses with little chance of securing compensation. Even if it was not practical for such rebels to slight castles, the destruction of property represented an uneven power exchange, one of the rare occasions where the scales were balanced against landowners.

For Matthew Strickland (1996, 90), the destruction of high-status buildings was 'a psychological blow which highlighted a lord's inability to defend his own'. He gives three examples of the destruction of religious houses in relation to warfare in the late 12<sup>th</sup> and early 13<sup>th</sup> centuries: the church of St Taurin, Evreux (1194); the monastery of Ely, Cambridgeshire (1216); and the monastery of Crowland, Lincolnshire (1216). While the orders to destroy the two sites in England were never carried out, in the case of Ely the *Annales prioratus de Dunstapali* record that the island's castle was destroyed by Faulkes de Bréauté. No mention was made of the monastery (*Annales Prioratus de Dunstaplia*, ed. Luard 1866, 48). This behaviour was closely associated with siege warfare, but not restricted to the aggressors. Those preparing to mount a defence sometimes stripped bare the surrounding area. However, this was often viewed poorly by contemporaries. The *Gesta Stephani* noted that in 1137–38 Miles de Beauchamp, in the area immediately around Bedford he 'forcibly took from everyone and carried away with him any food on which he could lay hands, and shamelessly robbing the townsmen and their neighbours, whom hitherto he had humanely spared as his own dependants' (*Gesta Stephani* trans. Potter 1976, 32).

## **8.2 Parks and the medieval landscape**

The maintenance of parks were taken very seriously. When the bishop of Norwich's park at Homersfield was broken into, and the lone resident deer killed, he described the perpetrators as 'evil-minded men' and excommunicated those responsible (Hoppitt 2007, 155). It should be self-evident that the study of the medieval landscape is still in a developing state. To take the example of medieval parks, the changing scholarship is reflected in the figures underpinning the subject, with estimates ranging from 1,900 active in the

medieval period to 3,200 at the start of the 14<sup>th</sup> century alone (Milesen 2009, 3, 109). A primarily documentary approach prompted Cantor and Hatherly (1979, 71) to suggest most were created in the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries. As such it might be expected that parks do not figure largely in documentary sources early in the medieval period. However, Hoppitt's (2007, 149–152) detailed study of Suffolk's parks has shown the inception dates for many parks can be pushed further back when not solely reliant on documentary sources. Meanwhile, in the later medieval period, parks became increasingly expensive to maintain. This led to attrition in terms of numbers, and from the zenith of 3,200 parks active at the start of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, they declined to around 2,200 by the late 15<sup>th</sup> century (Milesen 2005, 22). Parks retained their link with authority into the 16<sup>th</sup> century, as in Hertfordshire in 1549 rebels threatened to 'disparke and uncloze certaine closures and especiallie the parke of Sir Richard Lees knighte' (quoted in Jones 2003, 243).

In the same way that castle studies have been reappraised in recent decades to produce a more nuanced approach that blends symbolism with militarism, the understanding of medieval parks has progressed towards an understanding which incorporated symbolism and utilitarianism (Milesen 2007, 11–13). Poaching in the post-medieval period often carried out by gentry to antagonise rivals with whom they had a dispute (Sykes 2007, 57, citing Manning 1993), but on a practical level the parks were also a source of food. In the view of Edmund King (1994, 10) 'for any medieval ruler, reputation and authority are so closely linked that they cannot be separated'. While this was referring to King Stephen, it can be extrapolated further down the social scale and the implication is that a lord who gained a reputation as one who could not protect his property had his authority diminished accordingly.

Destruction of property – whether taking the form of park breaking, crop burning, theft of animals, destroying churches, or sacking towns – served to weaken the prestige of the person who was nominally in charge. Whereas examining the impact of slighting has offered an insight into the activities of the aristocracy, looking at the effect of destruction on the wider landscape acknowledges wider issues of warfare such as how the peasantry would have been affected.

The landscape too had changed since the 12<sup>th</sup> century, first with the proliferation of hunting parks to its zenith in the mid-14<sup>th</sup> century followed by a

period of decline following the Black Death as a population badly affected by the outbreak of disease was less able to maintain the parks created by their lords (Cantor 1983, 3; Marvin 1999, 224). However, there is disagreement about the chronology of parks, suggesting the Black Death may have had little discernible effect on park creation, and that rather than a sudden proliferation in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, it was in fact the 13<sup>th</sup> or 14<sup>th</sup> century in which they become more common (Miles 2009, 7). Regardless of the debate, the source material discussed here has few instances of parks during 'the Anarchy', while they are discussed more often in relation to the Peasants' Revolt and the Glendower Revolt.

### **8.3 Three cases studies of destruction in the landscape**

This chapter looks at three case studies: 'the Anarchy' of 1135–1154, the Peasants' Revolt of 1381, and the Glendower Revolt of 1400–1410. They cover a broad timespan and therefore demonstrate changes within the landscape and the role it played in civil war and rebellion. The different geographies of England and Wales also offer an opportunity to discuss the differences between these two countries. The documentary sources offer vivid descriptions of the English landscape and the effects of 'the Anarchy', often invoking ideas of desert and famine. Land use was a key concern for both the Peasants' Revolt and the Glendower Revolt. Amongst the demands of Wat Tyler and the citizens of St Albans (Hertfordshire) were the rights to hunting, indicating it was a widespread concern. In 1400 the rebellion in Wales was triggered by a disagreement over land, and ultimately transformed into wider issues of English rule in Wales. In both cases there were other contributing factors which drove the rebellions, but the landscape of the medieval period was the means of production and survival for many and a statement of power for the small social elite.

### **8.4 'The Anarchy'**

The civil war between Stephen and Matilda is often referred to as 'the Anarchy'. Until relatively recently, our understanding of this period has been based primarily on contemporary chronicles which emphasise the breakdown of order and the proliferation of castle. The author of the *Peterborough Chronicle* remarked

Every man built him castles and held them against the king. They filled the whole land with these castles. When the castles were built they filled them with devils and wicked men. ... At regular intervals they levied a tax called tensesie upon the villages. When the wretched people had no more to give, all the villages were plundered and burnt

*The Peterborough Chronicle*, trans. Clark 1970, 55–57.

This and other famous excerpts from other chronicles recounting the horrors of the conflict present a picture of the entire kingdom engulfed in civil war.

However, the labelling of the period as ‘the Anarchy’ has become contentious, with historians debating how extensive and severe the impact of the civil war was (Creighton & Wright 2016, Ch 1; Wright & Creighton 2016, 1–5). Indeed, the *Gesta Stephani*, one of the key sources for the period, focuses primarily on activity in southern England (Creighton & Wright 2016, 5). The term is used here for ease of reference rather than applying judgement to the state of government in the period.

At the heart of the conflict was a dispute over which of the pair was the rightful ruler. For the anonymous author of the *Gesta Stephani* the key to being a good ruler was establishing law and order. Henry I was described in glowing terms largely because he was ‘the fount of righteous judgement and the abode of law’ (*Gesta Stephani* trans. Potter 1976, 1). Under his rule England prospered. When Stephen arrives in England to claim the crown, the *Gesta* views him as the natural successor to Henry I in his authority and rule through law (*Gesta Stephani* trans. Potter 1976, 3); to be a successful ruler, one had to bring peace. When Stephen was captured at the battle of Lincoln (1141) and Matilda sought support from the bishop of Winchester, the clergyman justified changing allegiances by declaring that Stephen had failed to bring peace to the country, while Matilda was the daughter of Henry I, whom the author of the *Gesta Stephani* had described in such glowing terms (King 2010, 158). Behaviour in warfare was therefore linked to the legitimacy of the claim to rule.

The assertion that peace was rapidly becoming a distant memory is borne out by contemporary histories. The detailed *Gesta Stephani* gives many cases in which the opposing forces damaged both town and country, and the motif of “fire and sword” (*igne et gladio*) is used no less than ten times in the text and the countryside is frequently compared to a desert (*Gesta Stephani* trans. Potter 1976, 8–10, 123). William of Malmesbury’s *Historia Novella* notes that in 1140 ‘There were many castles all over England, each defending its own

district or, to be more truthful, plundering it' (*Historia Novella* trans. Potter 1998, 71), while Henry of Huntingdon's *Historia Anglorum* laments that in the same year 'through murder, burning, and pillage everything was being destroyed' (*Historia Anglorum* trans. Greenway 1996, 74–75). As discussed in relation to the slighting of castles, documentary sources may often exaggerate or generalise for effect. However, the frequent references to destruction caused by the warring parties span multiple sources suggests they should be considered reliable.

Warfare during 'the Anarchy' tended to focus around sieges, and pitched battles were often closely linked to the investment of sieges, either to break them or avoid them (Speight 2000). Key urban centres such as Bristol, Oxford, London, and Wallingford figure prominently in the narratives, so the chronicles emphasise activity around settlements; these locations, particularly those just mentioned, also contained important castles held by key figures active in the war such as Geoffrey de Mandeville and Robert of Gloucester. When discussing landscapes the details become less specific; in cases where incidents such as crop burning or animal theft are mentioned, locations are rarely given, which means these activities are abstracted from the geography of the conflict. Alongside towns and the countryside, the property of the church features prominently, usually to discuss how religious buildings have been ransacked or desecrated, and how those causing the disruption would be subject to divine retribution. This group tended to transcend the division between towns and countryside, and cases of churches being burnt are given when towns are fired or landscapes pillage (*Gesta Stephani* trans. Potter 1976, 68; *Historia Novella* trans. Potter 1998, 103–104). The language of the chronicles would indicate that the entirety of the country was subjected to pillaging and destruction, however as Speight (2000) notes the fighting was restricted to border areas between the two opposing groups, particularly southern England but also the Scottish and Welsh marches. Therefore, we should be cautious when drawing conclusions of the impact of 'the Anarchy' on the landscape. One of the few indications of the landscape relates to an incident from 1145. Stephen had given custody of Saffron Walden Castle to Turgeis, who refused to give it back to the king. Turgeis was captured by Stephen's men while out hunting and coerced into surrendering the castle (Bradbury 1996, 135–6). This shows that elite activities within the medieval landscape continued

unhindered, despite assertions of the chroniclers that England had become a desert.

Damaging agricultural land is a recurring theme through the chronicles. Early in the *Gesta Stephani* when the state of England after Henry I's death and before Stephen assumed the crown the chaos of the period and lawlessness was illustrated through references to stealing animals, noting that it was

very surprising, how so many thousands of wild animals, which formerly had overflowed the whole land in numerous herds, were so suddenly exterminated that from such a countless swarm you could soon have scarcely found two together.

*Gesta Stephani* trans. Potter 1976, 2

According to the *Historia Novella* grain became more expensive during the conflict (*Historia Novella* trans. Potter 1998, 75). However, the direct cause is difficult to ascertain especially as Stephen debased the coinage to pay for the war. Holdsworth (1987, 77) notes that while it was common practice in open warfare to pillage a land, stripping it of its resources, Stephen hesitated to act in this manner. Common practice does not mean it was viewed as acceptable by contemporaries. Shortly after a prisoner exchange was made to secure the release of Robert of Gloucester and King Stephen from their respective captor, Matilda 'sent a great many troops of cavalry to plunder in every direction' in a way which of which the author of the *Gesta Stephani* clearly disapproved (*Gesta Stephani* trans. Potter 1976, 91). When Stephen's own troops commit such acts he is either not present, as at Plympton in Devon, or the author of the pro-Stephen *Gesta Stephani* feels the need to explain the reasons. When Stephen behaves in a way for which Matilda is condemned it must be explained. In 1149 Stephen was considering how to press the war and came to the conclusion that he should 'attack the enemy everywhere, plunder and destroy all that was in their possession, set fire to the crops and every other means of supporting human life and let nothing remain anywhere' (*Gesta Stephani* trans. Potter 1976, 144–145). Stephen acknowledged that it was an 'evil' act to deprive his own people of the food they needed, but it was framed as the lesser of two evils as Matilda's own supporters did the same on a regular basis. The need to explain Stephen's behaviour while not doing the same for his supporters or Matilda's indicates that proper behaviour was necessary to maintain authority. The key to understanding this activity is that a lord should protect his people and allowing the landscape to be rendered unusable

agriculturally or letting the crops be destroyed actively undermined that lord's legitimacy. Later in the medieval period, Edward III ordered that anyone on his *chevauchée* in 1336 in Lochindorb (Morayshire) who robbed or pillaged would be executed, though according to contemporary reports the countryside was still burned (Lynch 2014, 73).

During a civil war participants are more likely to swap sides, and there are notable instances of people changing allegiances multiple times, such as the notorious Geoffrey de Mandeville. In such circumstances, a leader's direct authority over the behaviour of their adherents would have been more tenuous. This would help explain why in 1146 when Philip, son of Robert of Gloucester, switched from supporting Matilda to supporting Stephen he 'raged in all directions with fire and sword, violence and plunder; and far and wide reducing to bare fields and a dreadful desert the lands and possessions not only of those barons who opposed the king, but even of his own father' (*Gesta Stephani* trans. Potter 1976, 123). On finding a willing supporter close to one of his key opponents, Stephen would have done little to temper Philip's behaviour. It is with shock that the author of the *Gesta Stephani* writes that Philip attacked his father's property, as well as that belonging to the king's opponents more generally (*Gesta Stephani* trans. Potter 1976, 123). The fact that Philip was fighting against his father was more shocking than the fact that he was devastating the landscape. It was almost used to excuse the behaviour. It was especially damaging because not only should Robert of Gloucester have been able to protect his property, but he should have been able to command the allegiance of his son. In a civil war the legitimacy of each party is challenged almost in its entirety. The protection of property was a key concern of the social elite who conducted warfare, an agreement between the earls of Chester and Leicester and dated to 1149–1153 (King 1980, 2) indicates that they took steps to ensure their property was protected where possible. The agreement states that should the earl of Leicester take anything belonging to the earl of Chester it would only be temporary and would later be given back (King 2010, 260–261).

Destruction of property was used as a deliberate tool to intimidate and demoralise an opposing force. This is particularly clear when a castle could not be captured. In ten cases landscapes around castles, or areas notionally under their control, were targeted when the castle remained under the control of the opposing force. There is a chronological divide in when this particular approach



was taken. From ten documented cases, only two took place before the battle of Lincoln in 1141 compared to eight after. Most are derived from the *Gesta Stephani*, but the *Historia Novella* and *Historia Anglorum* also include cases. On six occasions, Stephen himself led the attacks and three were perpetrated by people who supported Empress Matilda. The remaining case was undertaken by Matilda, Stephen's queen. The chronological split is not merely a coincidence of coverage of the sources, as the *Gesta Stephani* is split roughly in half by the events of 1141 – spending more time discussing events before Stephen's capture. It reflects therefore a change in the way warfare was pursued and the methods involved. While the strength of the castle in question is usually given as the reason the landscape was ravaged, this may indicate a reluctance to engage in direct conflict with opposing forces in both parties, considering that each side experienced the capture of one of their key figures: King Stephen himself was captured at the battle of Lincoln in February 1141, while Robert of Gloucester was captured in relation to the siege of Winchester in September the same year. Attacking the landscape around the castle was an affront to those inside, proving they could not protect even the land that should have been easiest to control. In some respects it was a low-risk tactic: it avoided confronting a hostile army while undermining the social structure which gave them authority. Despite this it had its drawbacks as demonstrated by the way the author of the *Gesta Stephani* detailed Stephen's agonising over justifications to adopt a scorched earth policy.

Table 7.1. Cases in which the landscape around a castle was ravaged based on documentary sources. GS denotes the *Gesta Stephani*, HN the *Historia Novella*, and HA the *Historia Anglorum*.

Year	Area	Perpetrator	Allegiance	Chronicle
1138	Bristol	King Stephen	King Stephen	GS, 44
1139	Hereford	King Stephen	King Stephen	HN, 65
1141	London	Empress Matilda	King Stephen	GS, 81
1142	Wareham	King Stephen	King Stephen	GS, 96
1142	Oxford	King Stephen	King Stephen	HN, 127
1144	Wiltshire (especially near Cricklade)	William de Dover	Empress Matilda	GS, 113
1144	Unspecified – 'round the castles that the earl had built'	King Stephen	King Stephen	GS, 113–114

1145	unspecified – ‘the king’s lands’	Hugh Bigod	Empress Matilda	GS, 115
1150	Worcester	King Stephen	King Stephen	HA, 87
1153	Bedford	Henry of Anjou	Empress Matilda	GS, 115

The approach of targeting the landscape when the castle would not fall began with Bristol (Table 7.1). In fact, the two examples from before the battle of Lincoln are both focused on this area, though that should not be entirely unexpected as it was a key stronghold of those loyal to Matilda. Stephen led the siege of Bristol in 1138 but abandoned it. Instead he began ‘laying waste and eating up, plundering and carrying off everything around [Bristol]’ (*Gesta Stephani* trans. Potter 1976, 44). Similarly, the following year Stephen led a party to relieve his supporters besieged in Hereford Castle but turned away as Matilda’s supporters were too strong. Instead he raided near Bristol and ‘burnt the villages round Dunster’ (*Historia Novella* trans. Potter 1998, 65). In both cases there was an emphasis on destroying resources that could be used by the opposing force, but it seems to have been also a means of saving face. This was an area closely under control of people who supported Matilda, so damaging the landscape was a way of opposing their control of the area – as well as burning villages it likely also involved burning crops and stealing or slaughtering animals. The selection of Dunster is particularly important as the lord of Dunster, William de Mohun, had deserted Stephen’s cause to join Matilda (*Historia Novella* trans. Potter 1998, 65, n150). Here Stephen’s actions can specifically be linked to punishing someone who had previously supported him. He behaved similarly after capturing Plympton Castle (Devon) in 1136. The castle had belonged to Baldwin de Redvers who had rebelled against Stephen because the king had failed to grant him a title. A siege of Exeter followed and Stephen was eventually able to overwhelm Baldwin. The use of violence to punish Baldwin was uncompromising and ‘by frightful ravages, all Baldwin’s land, which in those districts is extensive and pleasant and rich in all good things, and returned to the king at Exeter with many thousands of sheep and cattle’ (*Gesta Stephani* trans. Potter 1976, 20–24). The mention of livestock indicates that the wider populace of the area suffered, both in terms of having their livelihood taken away from them, and perhaps facing hunger and economic problems afterwards. It was effective in subduing Baldwin’s supporters as they asked the king for forgiveness.

In 1142 on finding the castle at Wareham too well defended, Stephen 'raged cruelly everywhere with fire and sword ... pillaging and plundering everything that came in his way' (*Gesta Stephani* trans. Potter 1976, 96). Early on there is a distinct link between an inability to capture a castle with reprisal on the landscape, affecting everyone who inhabited it. This same trait was evident in Stephen's son, Eustace. He came close to capturing Matilda's son Henry in 1149 when the latter was travelling to Dursley Castle (Gloucestershire). Eustace responded by devastating the area, 'ravaging all the country round about' (*Gesta Stephani* trans. Potter 1976, 144). This event may be linked to an incident around the same time recorded in the *Historia Anglorum*, which states Eustace 'fell upon the lands of the noblemen who were with Henry, the son of the empress. There was no one to oppose him, and so with Mars and Vulcan as his companions, he inflicted much damage' (*Historia Anglorum* trans. Greenway 1996, 87). Eustace and Henry were the heirs to their respective parent's claim to the kingdom. The evidence of there being a social reason for these attacks rather than being a military imperative is that the source indicates these were specifically the lands of Henry's supporters.

Attacking the land around castles was a means to harass the garrison inside without necessarily facing them. It was particularly effective for William de Dover in 1144 who once he garrisoned Cricklade 'Castle' (Wiltshire) and ravaged the landscape, especially around castles (*Gesta Stephani* trans. Potter 1976, 113–114). At the time he was assisting Robert of Gloucester in the siege of Malmesbury Castle (Wiltshire), so it served the purpose of making it harder for the garrison to secure provisions. In reprisal Stephen 'used his strength in a most terrible way, with pillaging, fire and sword, everywhere round the castles that the earl [of Gloucester] had built' (*Gesta Stephani* trans. Potter 1976, 113–114). By exploiting Robert's presence at the siege of Malmesbury, attacking the land around the castles undermined the earl's authority. He was unable to protect his property because he was busy elsewhere. Hugh Bigod adopted a similar tactic the following year, attacking the land round the king's castles whilst Stephen was warring in Gloucestershire (*Gesta Stephani* trans. Potter 1976, 116).

In some instances, a town was captured without leading to the siege of the associated castle, as was the case at Oxford in 1142 and Worcester in 1150, both actions led by King Stephen (*Historia Novella* trans. Potter 1998,

127; *Historia Anglorum* trans. Greenway 1996, 87). Towns were rarely spared the effects of war, so anyone living in a settlement associated with a castle risked being attacked. In war it was acceptable for towns to be sacked, as was demonstrated at Lincoln after the eponymous battle in 1141, as noted by the *Historia Anglorum* (*Historia Anglorum* trans. Greenway 1996, 81). The language of the chronicles indicates that while this was an unfortunate convention, it was inexcusable to treat unfortified settlements in the same manner. Strickland's (1996, 224) study of medieval warfare found that the 'right of storm' was typically confined to internal conflicts rather than warfare between states. He suggests 'In such instances, the king was using his prerogative *qua* besieger to dispose of the lives of a garrison taken by assault to reinforce his ability to punish the rebels for treason'. When Stephen captured Worcester he set fire to the town (Bradbury 1996, 139). In 1153, Henry of Anjou (later King Henry II) found that Bedford Castle was too well defended so made a show of force and 'heavily plundering the town delivered it to the flames' (*Gesta Stephani* trans. Potter 1976, 155). This case is important, as the *Historia Anglorum* implies Henry's legitimacy as heir was enhanced by the fact he had not inflicted this kind of damage on the landscape (*Historia Anglorum* trans. Greenway 1996, 90). Henry of Huntingdon went even further, saying that 'God had provided that He would deliver the land to His child without bloodshed' (*Historia Anglorum* trans. Greenway 1996, 91). The *Gesta Stephani* initially noted that when Henry arrived in England in 1147 there were rumours that he brought destruction to the land, but these were exaggerated (*Gesta Stephani* trans. Potter 1976, 135). When a particular act of violence against the church was perpetrated under Henry's auspices, the author of the *Gesta Stephani* was at pains to explain that Norman knights were responsible for the theft and murder of monks. The barons who supported Henry were conscious of how this attack would appear and urged him to send the knights home (*Gesta Stephani* trans. Potter 1976, 152–153). This may indicate a particular concern for ecclesiastical property, though it may be the writer with a likely religious background was keen to emphasise the importance of the church. Supporting this is the fact the *Gesta Stephani* includes multiple cases of church property being desecrated and divine retribution following. Overall it references back to the role of the monarch as protector of his people. An act of violence against the land, as opposed to attacking a lord, went against the philosophy of what it meant to be a ruler.

While the *Gesta Stephani* portrays first Stephen and then Henry as legitimate rulers, there was a need to explain their acts of violence. No such treatment was given when Matilda's other supporters ravage the land. It is striking that Eustace, Stephen's son, was not afforded the same favourable treatment by the *Gesta Stephani*; Bradbury (1996, 141–142) suggests the part of the chronicle recounting the events of 1147 onward were rewritten by a different author, which would account for the change of partisanship from Stephen to the Angevin cause. Earlier that century Henry I had used the tactic of ravaging the land to undermine an opponent. In 1123 a plot against the king was uncovered and Henry moved against the rebels' strongholds. This included the castle and town of Pont Audemar in Normandy, which was the richest holding of Waleran, one of the rebels (Crouch 1986, 17; Crouch 2004). The siege of Pont Audemar is particularly well documented. According to Symeon of Durham's second-hand account written a few years later, after Henry I captured town and castle he began the process of attacking the countryside. According to Symeon an area 20 miles across was affected (quoted by Crouch 1986, 18), which closely approximates the extent of the honour of Pont Audemar. In this instance the attack was clearly punitive. It did not serve to weaken the garrison at Pont Audemar as the king had already captured the fortification and installed his own soldiers. Instead it was a calculated move to reduce Waleran's most important and prestigious holding. During 'the Anarchy' events are reversed since the destruction usually took place before a castle was captured because Stephen and Matilda were struggling to assert their legitimacy.

Destruction of the landscape was an act of rebellion or opposition. This is clear right from the moment of Henry I's death, at which point the Welsh took the opportunity to raid English land, and they 'cleared the villages by plunder, fire and sword, burnt the houses, and slaughtered the men' (*Gesta Stephani* trans. Potter 1976, 10). The chronicles spent little time discussing the activities of the Welsh, so more detail is not forthcoming. However, the same behaviour is evident in English barons who had grievances with one side or another and used the civil war to pursue these issues. The *Gesta Stephani* gives the most information in this regard, and all of the cases it gives are of people rising up against Stephen. This is most likely due to the knowledge of the pro-Stephanic writer being more complete regarding the activities of Stephen, while perhaps also indicating the way the conflict evolved, with the English baronage initially

embracing Stephen with dissent then rising at the instigation of Robert of Gloucester. There are self-serving examples such as Robert of Bampton in 1136 who 'gathered knights and archers in his castle and grievously afflicted all his neighbours with fire and pillage' (*Gesta Stephani* trans. Potter 1976, 18–19). However, in the cases of Baldwin de Redvers, William de Mohun, and Miles of Gloucester each joined Matilda's cause and at various points raided Stephen's land (*Gesta Stephani* trans. Potter 1976, 30, 54, 60).

Two examples stand out from the latter part of the conflict. In 1146 the earl of Chester was imprisoned by Stephen on suspicion of attempting to betray the king. He was released but his lands taken from him, and the earl began

everywhere to rage cruelly with plunder and arson, violence and the sword, sometimes against his opponents, sometimes even against his own side, and, what was cause for greater grief, sometimes against what belonged to the Church's peace.

*Gesta Stephani* trans. Potter 1976, 131

For the writer of the *Gesta Stephani* this was the ultimately combination of terrible attributes: not merely causing suffering to the general populace, but harming the people under his lordship, and damaging church property. Clearly a man who felt wronged, the earl of Chester was determined to inflict suffering to extract some form of justice for the way he had been treated. Military considerations such as preventing the enemy from collecting provisions are unlikely to have been amongst the earl's considerations. He may have sympathised with the way Geoffrey de Mandeville was treated years earlier when he was arrested and his castles confiscated. The similarity in phrasing indicates the author of the *Gesta Stephani* felt their situations shared similarities. According to the chronicle Mandeville 'raged everywhere with fire and sword; he devoted himself with insatiable greed to the plundering of flocks and herds; everything belonging to adherents of the king's party he took away and used up, stripped and destroyed' (*Gesta Stephani* trans. Potter 1976, 108–109). This included sacking the town of Cambridge, but worst of all in the eyes of the chronicler he attacked church property. As well as looting churches and pillaging lands owned by monasteries, Mandeville attacked the monastery at Ramsey in Cambridgeshire (*Gesta Stephani* trans. Potter 1976, 108–109). He then attempted to fortify the site, and Henry of Huntingdon recounts the portent that the walls bled while de Mandeville controlled the site (Bradbury 1996, 130). This literary tool serves to emphasise that even amongst the sacrilegious acts

carried out by soldiers, this stood out as particularly notable. Once someone felt sufficiently alienated, they felt they had free reign to attack the lands of their opponents. Whereas it may previously have been a matter that they knew came with risk as it was viewed poorly by contemporaries, when it was in response to what the perpetrators felt was unjust treatment it did not matter who was affected by their actions. As Bradbury (1996, 130) notes, the civil war made this all the more likely. Under normal circumstances a rebel who had been suppressed by the king had little leverage; during 'the Anarchy' any act against the king was magnified because it benefitted his opponents by dividing Stephen's attention and resources.

Queen Matilda, Stephen's wife, travelled to London in 1141 where she appealed to Empress Matilda for her husband's release. After her plea was declined she

brought a magnificent body of troops across in front of London from the other side of the river and gave orders that they should rage most furiously around the city with plunder and arson, violence and the sword, in the sight of the countess and her men.

*Gesta Stephani* trans. Potter 1976, 81

Recorded in the *Gesta Stephani*, this was juxtaposed to traditional female values as understood by the author. Instead this was explained the context of the empress's response to the queen's request. Empress Matilda had previously been portrayed as arrogant, authoritarian, and harsh so that the queen 'was abused in harsh and insulting language' (*Gesta Stephani* trans. Potter 1976, 81) conformed to the character established in the *Gesta Stephani*. Considering Londoners were generally sympathetic to Stephen's cause and hostile to the Empress, attacking the landscape around London risked turning popular opinion in the city against Stephen. Instead Queen Matilda felt that a show of strength around London was a suitable endeavour. By doing this in full view of Empress Matilda and her supporters it was an affront to her authority, defying her control of the city. The queen appears to have been unable to take the Tower of London. A powerful fortress, it may well have been beyond her means to take in force despite the accompaniment of a 'magnificent body of troops'. With the castle beyond her reach, causing destruction in the landscape was a suitable alternative as a means of reasserting the queen's own authority and undermining that of the empress. It is worth noting that '[archaeological]

evidence for war-damaged buildings and property is not unsurprisingly minimal and usually problematic' (Creighton & Wright 2016, 281).

While sources such as charters naturally emphasise the impact on landed lords, the chronicles demonstrate the whole of society was directly affected. The castle landscape was closely linked to the fortunes of the wider populace. In peacetime a castle could become a focus of economic activity. During war this associate was less beneficial for the inhabitants of nearby settlements, and could lead to either the settlement being sacked or the area being pillaged, damaging the agricultural infrastructure on which settlements depended. In warfare between countries, such as the Anglo-Scottish wars of the 14<sup>th</sup> century and when the Welsh rebelled against English rule in the late 13<sup>th</sup> century, castles were meant to protect the populace of the surrounding area. During 'the Anarchy' though there was warfare in England's border areas with Scotland and Wales, the rhetoric of the chronicles indicates that ecclesiastics at least viewed castles as the cause of much strife rather than a bulwark against it. There are numerous cases of castellans stripping resources from the surrounding country in anticipation of a forthcoming siege. This was done by Baldwin de Redvers provisioning Exeter in 1136 (*Gesta Stephani* trans. Potter 1976, 10), Miles de Beauchamp stocking Bedford Castle in 1138 (*Gesta Stephani* trans. Potter 1976, 32), while the *Gesta Stephani* complains more generally of this happening in 1143 (*Gesta Stephani* trans. Potter 1976, 104).

What was noticeable from the chronicles detailing Geoffrey de Mandeville's rampage across was the role of churches in protecting lay property. In Cambridge, the inhabitants turned to the church to store their valuables (*Gesta Stephani* trans. Potter 1976, 108–109). At a time when castles were seen as the cause of suffering, used by people to strip the land and loot the surrounding area, churches offered a sanctuary which should have been safe. The civil war meant churches had replaced castles as places of safety. The ecclesiastical background of the authors of the various chronicles no doubt accounts for the frequent focus on the damage inflicted on church property, but the new role of the church in protecting the lay people may also have accounted for outrage when the sanctity of the church was breached. The result is that there are numerous cases of churches being taken over by soldiers, as was the case at Hereford cathedral where the earth from the graveyard was used to create a castle motte, uncovering bodies of both the recently and long-



deceased (*Gesta Stephani* trans. Potter 1976, 72). A recurring theme is that those who entered the church itself – albeit not church lands – would suffer terrible fates as retribution for their actions. This is the case with Geoffrey de Mandeville who died after taking over Ramsey Abbey, and at Coventry where Robert Marmion expelled monks from their church. He later died in battle and the *Historia Anglorum* implied this was because of his crimes against the church (*Historia Anglorum* trans. Greenway 1996, 83). At Wallingford Stephen's troops had fortified a church and the author of the *Gesta Stephani* gave this as the reason the siege failed (*Gesta Stephani* trans. Potter 1976, 62). The implication was that by defiling holy ground, Stephen's soldiers could not win God's favour and hope to prevail against Matilda's forces. After the battle of Wilton in 1143 the town's nunnery was looted by Robert of Gloucester and his men. In this case divine retribution did not affect Robert directly, but his son who died soon after (*Gesta Stephani* trans. Potter 1976, 97). Similarly, the Normans who invaded England with Henry of Anjou and sacked a church, and were sent home by Henry because of their unacceptable behaviour, died crossing the English Channel (*Gesta Stephani* trans. Potter 1976, 152–153). In a small number of cases monasteries were built in association with slighted castles from 'the Anarchy' and Thompson (1986, 306) suggests these were created 'almost as if to purge the sin'. Newsham, Buckenham, and Wareham are a small grouping, and while this is an intriguing premise it is difficult to prove.

The documentary sources give little information on the details of lordly landscapes, and much has to be inferred. The attributes of lordly landscapes later associated with the social elite – parks, warrens, dovecotes, and the like – are almost never mentioned. Instead the landscape is less subtle: it is the fields used to produce crops, the land where animals grazed, and the property held by the church. All suffered direct and deliberate attack during civil war. While the range of reasons should not be oversimplified, the intention to undermine the authority of the owner is evident. Much as slighting could be perpetrated for a range of reasons, so too were the reasons for damaging the landscape complex. The traditional militaristic view is that ravaging the landscape would serve to deny resources to an enemy force. This was a key factor in some cases, but at the same time it could be an act of rebellion. Queen Matilda's destruction of the landscape immediately round London was a highly visible act of defiance after being denied her wishes. It could atone for failure in other

endeavours, whether attempting to capture a castle or take someone prisoner. Ultimately it served to assert the dominance of the party engaging in the destruction and undermine the authority of those whose land was being subjected to this treatment.

### **8.5 Revolting Peasants: 1381 and all that**

In the case of 'the Anarchy' and the Glendower Revolt the leaders on each side were the social elite. The war between Stephen and Matilda was fought between two people of royal blood, variously supported by the earls, barons, and bishops. When Owain Glendower led his rebellion in Wales more than 250 years later he portrayed himself as belonging to the dynasty of Welsh princes and opposed English lordship. Another point of contrast is that the civil war of the 12<sup>th</sup> century and the Welsh revolt of the 15<sup>th</sup> century saw groups opposing each other for control, each asserting their own legitimacy, whereas the rhetoric of the Peasants' Revolt was that of supporting the king against traitors. Simon Sudbury was denounced as such when he was murdered during the uprising, as was John of Gaunt who escaped capture but whose property suffered as a result (Saul 1997, 63).

The years leading up to the Peasants' Revolt were turbulent, and Cohn (2013, 123) identifies 28 different revolts and uprisings between 1350 and 1375, albeit on a much smaller scale than the rising of 1381. The latter has gained far more academic attention and research than the rebellions of the preceding decades. Despite this even establishing how many people were involved in the Peasants' Revolt is a significant challenge. A regional study of the manorial records of Essex, Hertfordshire, Kent, and Suffolk found that across these counties some 400 named individuals were associated with the revolt, though this cannot of course be considered comprehensive even within this region (Dyer 1994, 192–193). While figures may be impossible to pinpoint, it is inescapable that large numbers were involved. It should also be noted that whilst much of the narrative of the revolt as recorded in the chronicles revolves around London – especially with events such as the capture of the Tower, and



Fig. 8.1. A 15<sup>th</sup>-century depiction of Richard II meeting Wat Tyler at Mile End during the Peasants' Revolt from the Chroniques of Jean Froissart. Royal MS 18 E I f.175.

the murders of Watt Tyler (Fig. 8.1) and the Archbishop of Canterbury – discontent spread far beyond into the countryside as demonstrated by the geographic distribution of locations effected by destruction.

In Fig. 8.2 and Fig. 8.3 I have mapped destruction caused by the Peasants' Revolt based on locations mentioned in modern histories of the revolt and its consequences. This is the first time this has been attempted, and no doubt further iterations will be possible. Fig. 8.2 maps castles and seigneurial landscapes features such as parks and dovecotes which were damaged during the revolt while Fig. 8.3. shows the damaged caused to buildings aside from castles. Both maps show that the revolt spread far beyond London, but the activity of the revolt was concentrated in south-east England, while London and Essex in particular saw considerable damage to non-military buildings. Oman (1969, 90) identified Kent and Essex at the forefront of the conflict, with Norfolk, Suffolk, and Cambridgeshire approaching a similar level of disturbance. This is

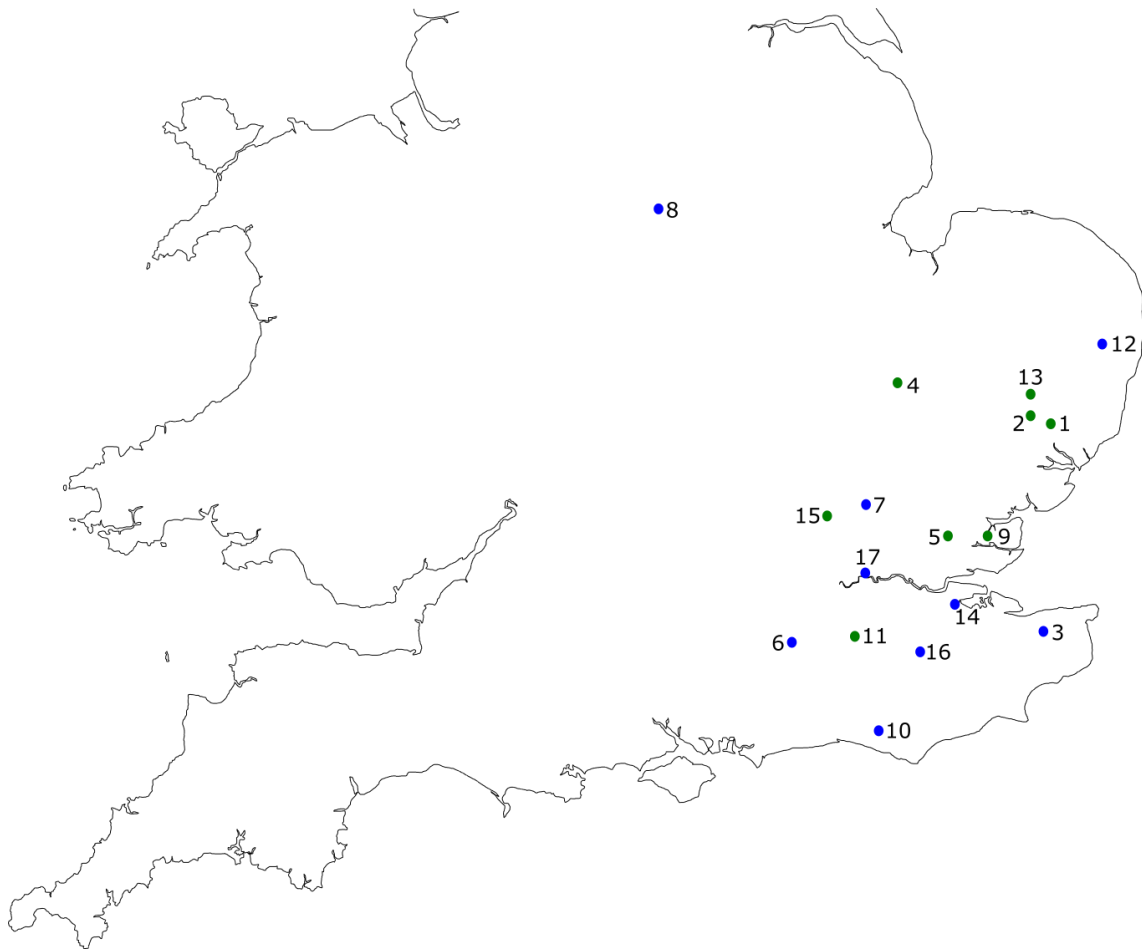


Fig. 8.2. Distribution of castles (green markers) and landscape features such as parks and dovecotes (blue) damaged during the Peasants' Revolt. All sites are mentioned in this chapter.

- |                        |                     |                      |                   |
|------------------------|---------------------|----------------------|-------------------|
| 1. Barham              | 2. Battisford       | 3. Canterbury Castle | 4. Cottenham      |
| 5. Crondon Park, Essex | 6. Guildford Castle | 7. Hertford Castle   | 8. Horsley Castle |
| 9. Lalling, Essex      | 10. Lewes Castle    | 11. Merstham, Surrey | 12. Mettingham    |
| Castle                 | 13. Old Newton      | 14. Rochester Castle | 15. St Albans     |
| 16. Tonbridge Castle   | 17. Tower of London |                      |                   |

broadly paralleled by the distribution map showing where the destruction of property took place. There are some outliers, including locality of Bridgwater in Somerset, where inhabitants attacked the house of John Sydeham, a local landowner, and stole property amounting to £100, and then progressed on to attack and burn the house of Walter Baron, and indeed murder the man himself (Dilks 1928, 65–66). It is immediately clear the nature of the revolt varied regionally, with some areas placing greater emphasis on the destruction of property. The castles attacked during the revolt were centres of governance and administration, and often linked directly to lordly authority by the presence of prisoners. Since prisons were not ubiquitous in castles it is unsurprising that the castles featuring in the revolt were more spread out than other buildings attacked during the revolt. Indeed Fig. 8.3 shows several clusters, indicating

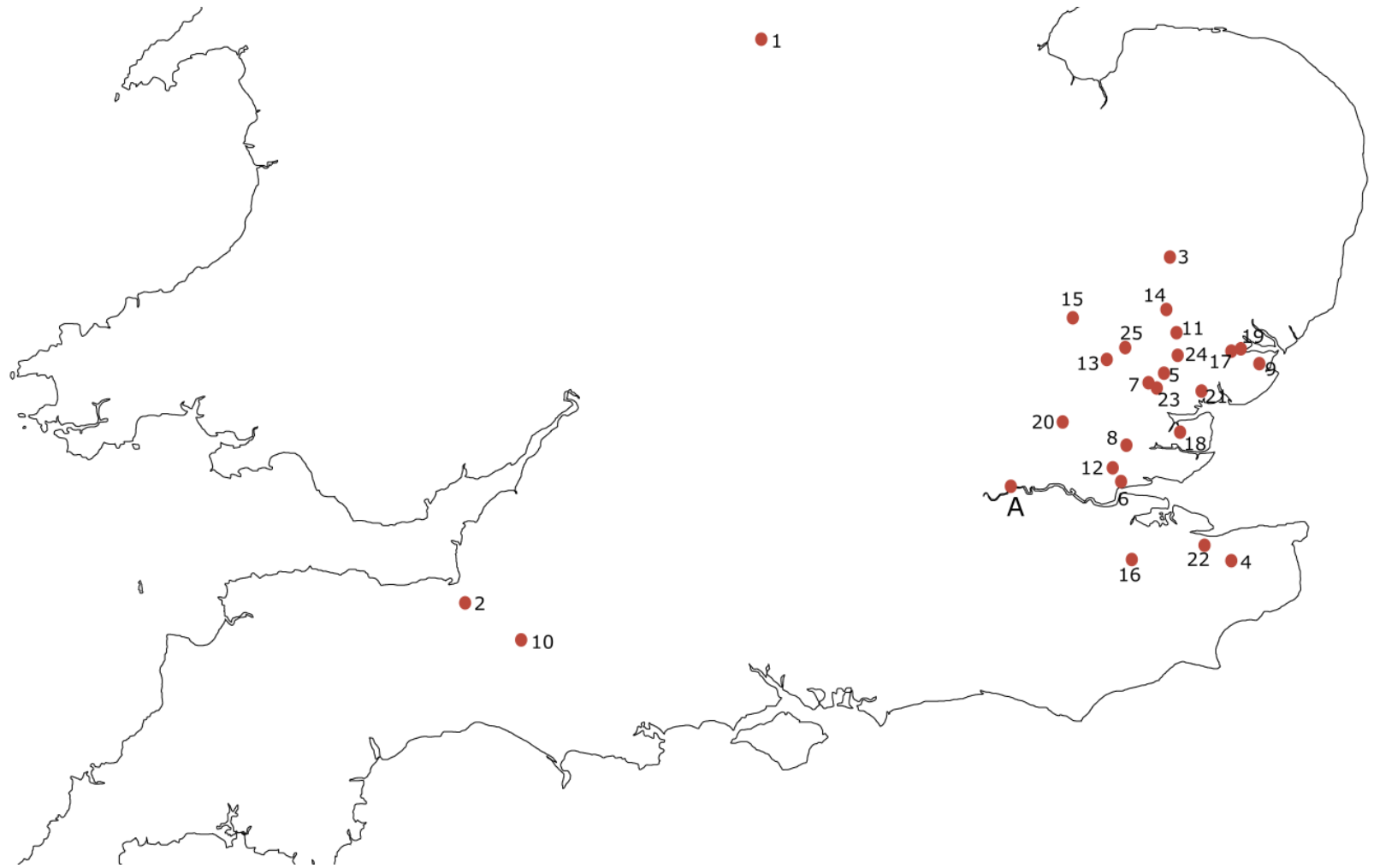


Fig. 8.3. Distribution of buildings aside from castles damaged during the Peasants' Revolt. Some sites are not mentioned in this chapter but are included based on Liddell & Wood 1981 and Crook 1987. These are shown in bold.

- |                     |                 |                        |                          |                             |                   |
|---------------------|-----------------|------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------|
| 1. Breadsall Priory | 2. Bridgwater   | 3. Bury St Edmunds     | 4. Canterbury            | 5. Coggeshall (and Tonford) | 6. Corringham     |
| 7. Cressing Temple  | 8. Downham      | 9. Great Oakley        | 10. Ilchester gaol       | 11. Lamarsh                 | 12. Langdon Hills |
| 13. Lindsell        | 14. Liston      | 15. Little Chesterford | 16. Maidstone gaol       | 17. Manningtree             | 18. Mayland       |
| 19. Mistley         | 20. North Weald | 21. Peldon             | 22. Preston by Faversham | 23. Rivenhall               | 24. Wakes Colne   |
| 25. Wethersfield    |                 |                        |                          |                             |                   |

A – London, covering the sites of: Clerkenwell preceptor, Clerkenwell Priory, Fleet prison, Highbury Manor, Lambeth Palace, Marshalsea prison, Newgate Prison, The Savoy, and Temple.

that local communities used the revolt to attack the property of unpopular notable individual, which is supported by the documentary evidence. It emphasises the importance of community in the revolt.

By Dyer's (1994, 192–194) estimate there were 107 documented instances of records being destroyed in association with the rebellion. These incidents are not represented on the maps but offer a different kind of destruction. It was particularly popular in north Norfolk, where the rebels waged 'a bitter war against parchment' (Edwards 1984, 34, quoting Réville & Petit-Dutaillis 1898, 113). These documents were the tools of local government, codifying property rights and local disputes. Their destruction had the effect of upsetting the established order. The most symbolic acts of destruction during the Peasants' Revolt were inflicted on high-status unfortified buildings. The Savoy was the palatial London home of John of Gaunt who had in the years leading up to the revolt managed to alienate the general populace of the city (Emery 2006, 240); the previous owner had been granted a licence to crenellate the Savoy (Coulson 1982, 76), but the focus on the richness of the furnishings indicates it was more important as a residence and perhaps not seriously fortified. A document from 1324 notes the Savoy was enclosed (Coulson 1982, 98 n20), indicating that even if the palace was not fortified in the manner of a castle it used a wall to demark the extent of the area belonging to the palace. The chroniclers which discuss the revolt typically mention looting amongst the activity of the rebels, but at the Savoy there was a different approach. The Savoy was described as being 'unrivalled in splendour and nobility within England' and an inventory before the events of 1381 suggests the contents were worth £10,000 – a valuation that does not take into account the building itself. It was therefore highly unusual that rather than looting the opulent Savoy its contents were almost meticulously destroyed. A fierce conflagration was started deliberately and consumed the building. Nicholson (2007, 2) describes the Savoy as 'blown up with gunpowder' but the account of the *Anonimale Chronicle* (quoted in Dobson 2008, 156) mentions only burning. This thesis has found no evidence for the use of gunpowder to slight castles in the medieval period. Rakoczy (2007, Ch 3) gives a discussion of the use of gunpowder in the Civil War and how it has often been given as a method of destruction without corresponding evidence. While gunpowder was available in 1381, it is unlikely



to have been used to destroy the Savoy, especially as it is unlikely to have been stored there so procuring some would have been a significant challenge.

The chroniclers reported that one rebel at the Savoy who had tried to secure some items for himself had been thrown onto the flames (Barker 2014, 231–232). It is hard to over-emphasise how important this act was for the rebels subverting John of Gaunt's authority. The Savoy was his administrative centre and he lost records that allowed him to run his estates. The destruction of his property was a calculated assault on John of Gaunt's identity and the apparatus which allowed him to carry out the activities expected of the social elite, particularly that of administering his properties.

The revolt focussed on individuals and their property. In her discussion of medieval peasant identities and resistance Sally Smith (2009b, 326–327) suggests there was a 'public transcript' which established how peasants behaved and appeared: depictions of the 'Labours of the Months' found in churches would have been the only visual representation peasants saw of themselves. Wearing ornamental items such as headdresses was a way of subverting this identity, while sumptuary laws of the 14<sup>th</sup> century attempted to reinforce the social hierarchy by legislating that certain types of clothing could only be worn by those who passed a wealth qualification. For example, people who 'have not 40s of goods' were prohibited from wearing items which cost more than 12*d* (Smith 2009b, 314–315). Smith (2009b, 315) points out in a discussion of peasant identities, 'the very attempt to promulgate [sumptuary laws] indicates that clothing and appearance were seen as key to the maintenance of social control at this time'. Therefore, wearing such items was one form of resistance, but being able to destroy such items when they were possessed by the social elite was a much rarer form. Looting the Savoy gave the peasants the unusual opportunity to diminish John of Gaunt's social status by destroying items restricted to the elite. Taking items from the Savoy would have risked reprisal if the items were tracked down. If the peasants could not elevate their own position through appropriating high-status material culture, the alternative was to deprive the social elite of the objects which denoted and even defined their social standing. Excavations on the site of the Savoy Palace have been limited – indeed the plan of the complex is not known – but seven trenches opened by MOLA revealed 14<sup>th</sup>-century decorated floor tiles. MOLA suggested the remains of the building were reused when the hospital was built

in 1508 (Mackinder 2015, 4, 21). This would fit with the documentary accounts as a conflagration might be inconsistent in the areas it affects, leaving parts which are salvageable. It is significant that there was a strong emphasis on the destruction of items within the palace, rather than just the fabric of the building. This illustrates how material culture in the Middle Ages was used to illustrate rank: the codification in law of the restriction of expensive items to the social elite meant that they took on greater significance as tools of resistance.

John of Gaunt was not alone in finding his London properties under threat, and Robert Hales found himself in the same position. He was prior of the Hospital of St John and earlier in 1381 had been appointed treasurer of England (Sarnowsky 2004). The chroniclers mention that Clerkenwell Priory, enclosed by a precinct wall, was sacked and some accounts remark that it was burnt. Entering the precinct would likely have involved breaking in through the gatehouse. Excavations by MOLA between 1986 and 1995 uncovered no evidence of widespread fire, and the indications of burning within the courtyard pre-dating the Tudor period but otherwise lacking dating evidence could originate from another event or perhaps a hearth (Sloane & Malcolm 2004, 89, 93, 123). The preceptory was also included in the putative destruction. Trial excavations in the 1986 discovered a structure which incorporated two Caen stone mouldings in the fill of the wall (Richardson 1987, 275–276). While no absolute dating evidence was recovered, the use of mouldings in wall infill indicates the building previously on the site was severely damaged, possibly as a result of the Peasants' Revolt. The archaeological record indicates that in this instance the peasants were primarily concerned with portable items, rather than the structure of the priory. It is also instructive that some of the chroniclers believed there had been a conflagration; the rhetoric was that the peasants used a destructive force raging out of control, which is how they wanted to portray the revolt itself. While the burning of records took place, the archaeological record suggests as with reports of slighted castles we should question the documented cases of burning.

In addition the Temple, which belonged to the Hospitallers and was used by lawyers, was also broken into and its contents looted or burned (Saul 1997, 64). Further afield, at Cressing Temple in Essex the preceptory belonging to the Hospitallers was looted, with £20 of property stolen, in addition to the burning of records and indeed books unrelated to taxation (Page & Round 1907, 177–



178). While the attack on Cressing Temple was recorded in the *Anonimale Chronicle*, with the writer recording 'the commons arrived at the manor, ate the food, drank three casks of good wine and threw the building to the ground, then burning it' (quoted in Ryan 1993, 15), very little of the medieval site has been excavated. Only 6 of the medieval buildings were excavated, and none produced evidence of the destruction supposedly caused during the Peasants' Revolt (Robey 1993, 49). There has been little further work since a monograph on the site was published in 1993 (Essex County Council 2016).

Following the looting of the Hospitallers' priory at Clerkenwell in London on 13<sup>th</sup> June, the rebels moved north to Highbury Manor and burnt it (Nicholson 2007, 226). Highbury was closely associated with Hales as he had only recently built it the manor house (*The Westminster Chronicle 1381–1394*, trans. Hector & Harvey 1982, 5). At the time the area was rural, with woods north of the manor house and within the demesne of the manor while large areas were devoted to arable (Baggs, Bolton & Croot 1985, 69–76). The Patent Rolls for 1380 record that John de Northampton was in a dispute with Hales and retaliated by attacking Hales' servants and 'consumed his growing corn and grass' at Highbury (*Calendar of the Patent Rolls Richard II. 1377–1381* trans. Lyte 1895, 567). The Peasants' Revolt was an outlet for tension built up through local disputes. With the dispute between Robert Hales and John de Northampton still recent by 1381, it is possible that John was involved in the attack on Highbury manor having previously demonstrated his willingness to assault Hales' possessions.

Exploiting the crisis by making false claims was also used as a tool in local disputes. Sir Ralph Carmynowe claimed that Sir William Botrioux had entered his park at Boconnoc in Cornwall without permission and hunted his animals (Cantor 1983, 18; Prescott 1984, 75–76). The extent of the park is unknown (Cornwall & Scilly HER 2012). Importantly, though the courts decided this story was a fabrication, it offers insight into the medieval mind-set. An initial act of trespassing on another's land would have been further exacerbated by hunting the animals that resided there. Hunting was a highly ritualised activity and was the right of the lord, so by hunting without his permission the perpetrators were not just defying his authority but subverting his control over his own property. This explains why poaching was sometimes used as a tool in disputes between lords (Sykes 2007, 56–57). A group of rebels attempted to

destroy a wood in Merstham (Surrey) which belonged to the prior of Canterbury, while another band broke into Crondon Park (Essex) which belonged to the bishop of London (Prescott 1984, 32, 337). This behaviour had markedly different meanings from trespassing and poaching carried out in stealth, and most likely at night. Rather than hiding their activity this was a public statement of the sought for change in society's distribution of power.

William Delton was accused of trying to instigate a new rebellion in September 1381 in Cambridgeshire and gathered his supporters in a wood (Prescott 1984, 237). A game law introduced in 1390 demonstrates the fear that previously lordly landscapes could be manipulated and used to undermine the social order, commenting that

[poachers] go hunting in parks, warrens, and connigries of lords and others, to the very great destruction of the same, and sometimes under such colour they make their assemblies, conferences, and conspiracies to rise and disobey their allegiance'

Marvin 1999, 227

Whereas parks had previously been areas of leisure for lords, the events of 1381 cast them in a new light. The environment that they had previously exerted control over, both in terms of controlling access and killing animals within the park became a new environment which held the threat of rebellion. The focal point of parks and hunting rights in Wat Tyler's demands changed how they were perceived by the lords who had previously held park ownership as a status symbol. After the revolt they represented a liability, evident in the passing of the new game law in 1390.

Zooarchaeological evidence has found that deer bones in urban contexts were distributed as to indicate the carcasses had been brought to the town whole rather than undergoing ritualistic unmaking as was typical of an elite hunt. Instead this is evidence of urban populations poaching deer and dismembering it at home rather than the park where they were likely to be caught (Sykes 2007, 56–57). Poaching was a perversion of the park or wood's purpose. They were created as elite landscapes, and their walls and careful management – controlling access to resources within – reinforced the social hierarchy. The *Gesta Stephani* colourfully demonstrates that for a lord to lose his castle was so shameful the earl of Warwick died after being told Warwick Castle had been captured (*Gesta Stephani* trans. Potter 1976, 155). For a lord to have had his park broken into would have been a challenge to his authority, and one he was

expected to react to, otherwise the king had the right to dispossess him of the part (Marvin 1999, 225). The 15<sup>th</sup>-century poem *Sir Degrevant* expressed a conflict between an earl and a baron by showing the earl attacking the baron's property; the baron was required to respond as to do otherwise would have expressed weakness (Marvin 1999, 236–239). With such a large perimeter, complete security would be no more than an aspiration. But for a lord's land to become the scene for rebellion to foment against him would have been intolerable; it inverted the meaning of the curated landscape. The decision to meet in a wooded area was most likely practical as it made observation and intrusion more difficult, but it ended up transforming these areas into places that held danger. What had previously been a demonstration of control became in the medieval mind a breeding ground for discontent. The revolt helped change the landscape by changing how it was viewed by the elite, as expressed through legislation created not long after the suppression of the revolt.

The act of hunting on someone else's property showed that not only did those involved not recognise the authority of the other party but they were proving they could carry out the activities that were meant to be reserved for the person they were in a dispute with, thereby elevating their own status. Parks were enclosed areas, often bounded by a ditch and a bank surmounted by a palisade or in some cases a stone wall (Cantor 1983, 3). Liddiard (2005, 118) observed that

[During the Peasants' Revolt] we see the deliberate destruction of specific landscape features, dovecotes, mills, warrens, fishponds and parks were singled out for attention, strong evidence that the seigneurial imagery ... resonated right across medieval society.

This behaviour would indicate that even if parks were not literally fortified, those involved in the revolt appreciated the symbolism of the bank and ditch which represented a real obstacle to entering these lordly landscapes. This lent itself naturally to military symbolism, and the 15<sup>th</sup>-century manuscript of *The Master of the Game*, made for James Tuchet, baron Audley (Fig. 8.4). In this image the walls are crenellated, while the entrances to the park are through twin tower gatehouses which are reminiscent of castle architecture it shows that the elite viewed parks as an extension of their power and authority.

The transgression against a lordly landscape would have been heavy with meaning, showing the owner lacked the ability to protect his property. This would have been the message conveyed by Robert Stockhale who was

accused of burning a dovecote embedded in a manorial landscape near the Cottenham home of Roger Harleston during the revolt of 1381 (Prescott 1984, 48, 113). Destruction on a large scale was used against the most reviled figures, while looting or theft was used in other cases. John Bampton was a



Fig. 8.4. A 15<sup>th</sup>-century depiction of a park, showing how the area was enclosed, and military architecture alluded to. MS Bodley 546 f.3v.

bailiff and later Justice of the Peace in Essex who established his unpopularity by corruptly imprisoning people and keeping the money they paid for release. During the Peasants' Revolt some of his livestock was stolen from around Lalling in Essex (Prescott 1984, 123, 138, 300). House looting in Old Newton, Barham, and Battisford was also accompanied by thefts of animals (Prescott 1984, 159). Stealing property – whether from houses or from the landscape – was an alternative method of expressing rebellion against someone's authority and served to redress perceived wrongs. The importance of the landscape to the rebellion is demonstrated by the demands put forward by Wat Tyler, which included the universal right to hunting:

All warrens, as well in fisheries as in parks and woods, should be comen to all; so that throughout the realm, in the waters, ponds, fisheries, woods and forests, poor as well as rich might take venison and hunt the hare in the fields

Almond 2003, 93

The act of poaching was an act of defiance and subversion; trespassing into an elite landscape to take animals reserved for the lord was an act of resistance, part of the infra-politics which is argued to be a necessary precursor to widespread events such as the Peasants' Revolt (Smith 2009a, 404, 408).

Theft and poaching during the Peasants' Revolt might be considered an aspect of slighting because it was a way for people to express their discontent with those who had power in society. As demolishing houses was typically beyond the means of the peasants, poaching and theft allowed the peasants to inflict harm on the elite. It showed that the elite were unable to prevent people trespassing on their property and carrying out activities they found objectionable. While poaching and theft took place at other times, here it was specifically used to diminish the status of the landowner and remind them that their power had its limits. Elite landscapes were expressions of identity, status, and power. Whereas a castle could have its walls thrown to the ground, slighting a landscape was more challenging so particular aspects were targeted.

The *Westminster Chronicle* notes that Lambeth Palace, the seat of Archbishop Simon Sudbury, was wrecked during the revolt. It was not a simple act of theft as they “set fire to most of its abandoned contents ... [and] stove in wine-barrels and drained them, pouring what wine was left on to the floor” (*The Westminster Chronicle 1381–1394*, trans. Hector & Harvey 1982, 3). Much as there had been a focus on destruction rather than profiteering at the Savoy,

here the overt intention was to destroy Sudbury's property as a mark of opposition. As was the case at Clerkenwell, small-scale excavations in 1980 did not uncover evidence of this destructive fire, however this may have been because the palace continued in use and any evidence of destruction was cleared (Densem 1981). From the *Chronicle of Henry Knighton* it is clear the keeper of John of Gaunt's wardrobe felt this would still be the case during the revolt of 1381 as he arranged for the valuables in Leicester Castle to be taken to the abbey north of the city (trans. Dobson 1983, 279). The abbot, however, refused as he feared sheltering the property of a man who had incurred the rebellion's wrath in London risked bringing destruction onto Leicester abbey. Despite this the property was still left with the church, albeit in the grounds of the church of St Mary de Castro within Leicester Castle (trans. Dobson 1983, 279). This was a demonstration of the efficacy of the revolt; much as parks became seen as dens of conspiracy, churches felt they were no longer safe havens. Religious office was no protection in an atmosphere where political grievances were aired on a national and local scale, as was the case with Simon Subury and the St Albans Abbey respectively.

The revolt was an opportunity to settle local disputes, and this can be identified as the underlying cause of some acts of destruction. Bury St Edmunds Abbey suffered the worst damages of any religious foundation, and this is attributed to the poor relationship between the monks and the inhabitants of the town itself (Emery 2000, 15). Horston/Horsley Castle (Derbyshire) was broken into as part of an ongoing feud between a local family and John of Gaunt (Dunn 2004, 138). As the case of John of Gaunt demonstrated secular lords were just as vulnerable as religious houses. Further down the social scale justices, jurors, and people involved with administration risked reprisal from the rebels. Again their property was at risk, not just buildings, as rebels stole cattle from the estates of Edmund Lakenheath and Roger Wolfreton, both in Suffolk (Dunn 2004, 155–156). This is particularly supported by the judicial records that complement the accounts of the chroniclers as an alternative source of information about the impact on the landscape. The trials after the revolt record some of the activities the rebels were accused of (Prescott 1984, 371), and offer further evidence of the treatment of property belonging to hated figures. While their property was at risk, few landlords were attacked in person and in the cases where this did happen it was usually because they were royal officials



(Dyer 1994, 195). Animals were stolen or slaughtered, parks were trespassed against, records were burned, and manors were looted. Elite landscape and the documentation that reinforced the social structure – through recording taxes and land ownership – were deliberately attacked.

In a handful of cases castles were successfully broken into, usually uncontested, but compared to warfare there simply were not the resources to capture and hold castles. The capture of Hertford (Hertfordshire) and Horston/Horsley (Derbyshire) castles can be attributed to the close link to John of Gaunt (Prescott 1984, 309–310, 339). As well as seeking to punish John of Gaunt by damaging his property as was done at the Savoy, there was a strong inclination to attack castles due to their administrative roles. At Lewes Castle (Sussex) and Mettingham Castle (Suffolk) records were burnt or carried off, while prisoners were freed from Canterbury and Rochester (both in Kent) (Fryde 1996, 47; Prescott 1984, 266; Powell 1896, 24). Tonbridge Castle was broken into because rebels thought John Bampton and Nicholas Herring, two very unpopular royal officials, were hiding inside, while others entered the Tower of London because Simon Sudbury took refuge in its chapel (Prescott 1984, 143, 149, 300; Parnell 1993, 53). The reason the rebels were able to capture Mettingham Castle is because it was lightly garrisoned, while at the Tower the garrison did not oppose the rebels. At Canterbury, houses of leading figures in local politics were attacked as well as tools of government, namely the town hall and castle. In the wider landscape people with economic links to Canterbury had their property attacked and broken into as was the case for the holdings of William Makenade (a local steward) at Preston by Faversham or Sir Thomas Fog (local gentry) at Tonford (Butcher 1984, 107, 109).

Despite the small number of castles that were successfully captured, it was much more common for the wider landscape to be deliberately damaged, whether trespassing in parks or attacking buildings embedded within high-status landscapes. While records at manorial centres were most commonly destroyed, the buildings themselves represented the focal point from which administration took place, particularly the collection of the unpopular poll tax. Entering these buildings was easier than taking castles. The destruction witnessed during the Peasants' Revolt was caused by cumulative personal acts of rebellion rather than a military one. When castles were unattainable, parks and elite curated landscapes were a more realistic objective and offered the opportunity to

express their opposition and feeling towards the landowner in a way which could not be ignored.

The apparatus of authority and control were deliberately targeted during the revolt. Two aspects in particular stand out: the treatment of documents and the spate of gaol breaking. When the peasants arrived in London they broke into the prisons of Marshalsea, Fleet, and Newgate (Saul 1997, 64–65). On top of this the gaols at Ilchester and Maidstone was also broken into during the revolt (Butcher 1984, 107; Dilks 1928, 67). While prisons were broken open, rebels continued to be incarcerated. Guildford Castle acted as the county gaol for both Surrey and Sussex, but was too small to accommodate the numbers required. As a direct consequence, the castles of Arundel and Lewes were used to hold prisoners (Barker 2014, 372). Towns gaols had proven vulnerable, whereas those within castles were more secure, not necessarily because they were designed to keep people in but because their design to keep people out prevent people from entering. In the 12<sup>th</sup> century Henry II mandated the construction of a gaol in each county, and that it should be located in a borough or castle (Nevell 2014–15, 204). The link with castles was already long established, but the retreat to the castle suggests a psychological retreat to places that had previously been safe: though the fall of the Tower of London in June 1381 may have shaken faith in castle walls. Even when prisoners were held within castles they could be successfully broken out as was the case with several instances in Kent: Rochester, Tonbridge, and Canterbury as mentioned above.

### **8.5.1 St Albans: a case study in negotiating local destruction**

The course of the rebellion at St Albans (Hertfordshire) is documented in detail by Thomas Walsingham, a monk at the abbey who lived through the events he described. The tensions between the rights of the town and abbey had a long history and boiled over in 1381. They provide an instructive insight into the rebellion and offer an opportunity for discussion of issues of resistance through material culture and control of access in medieval society.

While attacks on manorial and administrative centres are prominent in the chronicles, other aspects of the landscape were also targeted and as major land owners, and the church was frequently affected. Though St Albans was an urban community, the concerns of the abbey's tenants extended to rural



landscapes: land was trespassed against, whilst hedges were pulled down, making previously enclosed land accessible. The town of St Albans did not immediately join the rebellion but became active once news of events in Kent and Essex reached the town (Justice 1994, 159). The rebels participated by enacting

the destruction that very night of the sheepfolds which the abbot had set up in Falconwood and other woods, the speedy cutting down of the gates to Eywood and other woods and also the immediate demolition by every possible means and methods of the sub-cellarer's house, which ... blocked the view of the townspeople and was prejudicial to their nobility as citizens

*Chronica Maiora of Thomas Walsingham* trans. Preest 2005 133

This served to reshape the landscape by changing the means of access; areas which had previously been restricted to the abbot could now be used by the whole town.

The townspeople demanded from the abbey rights to free warren, fishing, hunting, and the right to graze animals in common pasture. As part of this final term, the townspeople proposed changing the boundaries of the town. When these rights were confirmed by Richard II the inhabitants of the town burned the abbey's records and put a rabbit in the town's pillory (Dunn 2004, 139–144). Sopwell Priory immediately to the south of the town was dependent on the abbey; a 17<sup>th</sup>-century map shows there was a rabbit warren next to the enclosed precinct of the priory (National Heritage List for England 2012), which may be where the local populace found a rabbit for their symbolic gesture. With one act they were destroying the documentation that allowed the abbey to assert rights over the land used as common, and by putting the rabbit on public display they were defying the abbey's waning control of warrening. In June 1381 the townspeople of St Albans forced the abbey to recognise the town as a borough, and to redraw the boundaries between borough and abbey. The inhabitants of St Albans celebrated by leading a procession along the route of the new border, stopping at key points for a toast (Dunn 2004, 146–147). This was especially important since only the lord, that is to say the abbot, had the right to lead such a procession at what was meant to represent the physical extent of his authority (Roberts 1981, 128). After processing round the new border, the townspeople went to the Eleanor Cross near the market place just beside the abbey, the junction between the town and abbey. There they read out the charter granting them new freedoms (Roberts 1981, 131, 135, 168).

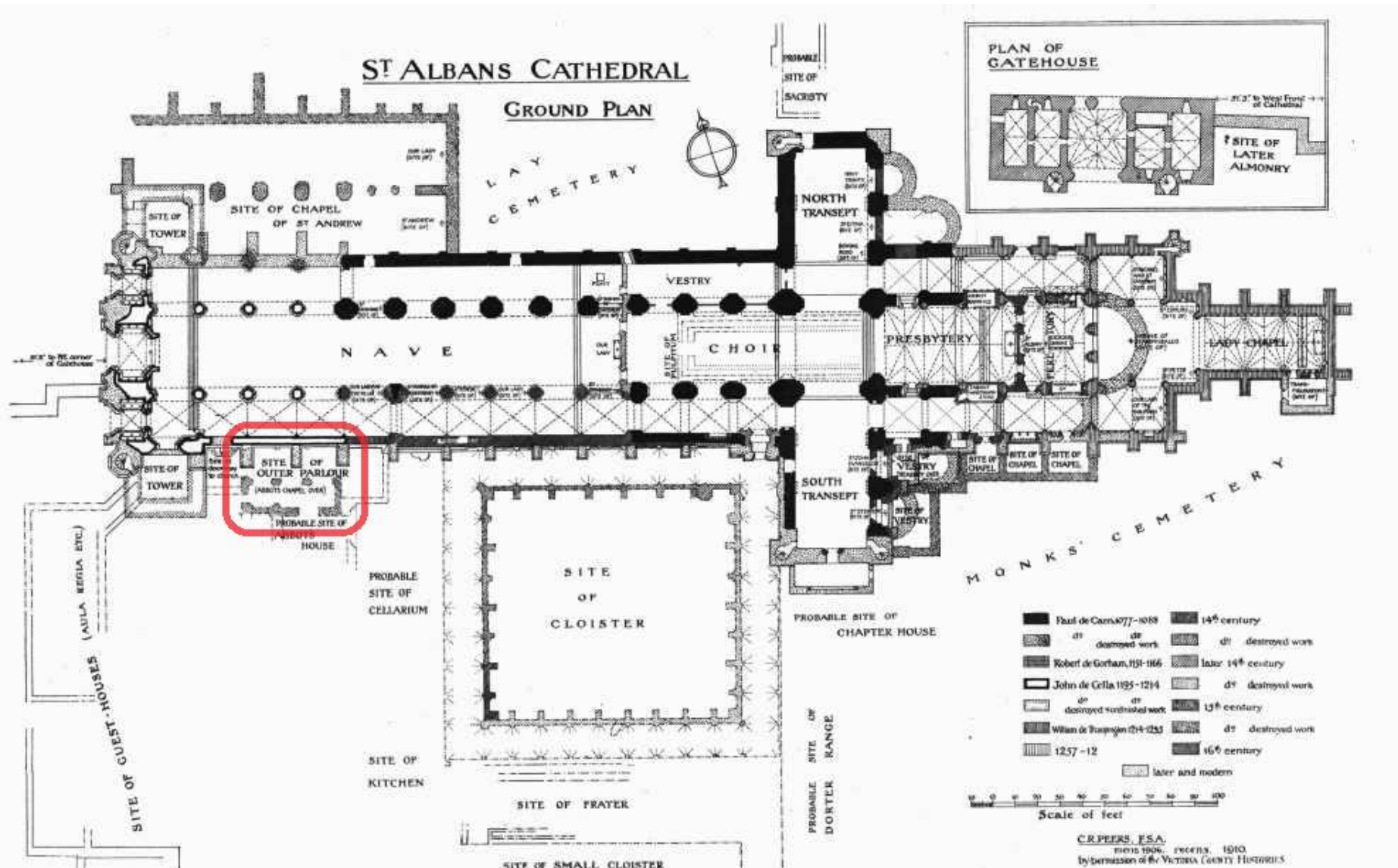


Fig. 8.5. Plan of St Albans Cathedral, with the abbey to the south. In 1330 quernstones were confiscated from the townspeople and used to floor the outer parlour. The outer parlour where guests were received is highlighted in red. Based on RCHME (1910).

This had the effect of allowing the townspeople to experience the landscape in a new way. They now entered areas that had previously been under the jurisdiction of the abbey not as trespassers but as lawful citizens. It also helped the peasants to reappropriate the landscape by imitating the behaviours and activity of the traditional lord of the manor. St Albans had witnessed an episode of resistance against the abbey's authority in 1330 when the peasants began using handmills so they did not have to use the mill controlled by the abbey. The abbey reacted by confiscating the handmills and using the quernstones to pave the floor of the abbey's outer parlour (Dunn 2004, 145; *Chronica Maiora of Thomas Walsingham* trans. Preest 2005, 136). The outer parlour (Fig. 8.5, shown in red) would have been used for receiving guests (Kerr 2007, 98–99), so any visitors from the town itself would have been reminded of the events of 1330, and the symbolism is immediately obvious. The importance of this as an assertion of authority is further confirmed by how the peasants behaved during the revolt of 1381. They entered the abbey and tore up the outer parlour's floor, reclaiming back the stones which had become an emblem of the abbey's supremacy. Though it was 50 years since the original dispute, the incident was part of the public transcript of the town's history because of the prominent location of the quernstones. Walsingham recounts that on retrieving the quernstones they were broken down and distributed amongst the townspeople (quoted in Justice 1994, 158). They were after all no longer fit to use as quernstones, only symbols, and returning the physical objects which had become an embodiment of the town's dispute with the abbey served to underline the change in power structures at St Albans. The abbot went one step further and when the Peasants Revolt was drawing to a close coerced the townspeople to return the quernstones as well as pay reparations of £200 for other damage incurred during the rising (*Chronica Maiora of Thomas Walsingham* trans. Preest 2005, 161). The demand for the return of the stones was another opportunity to assert the abbey's authority. The stones themselves as practical items had been shorn of all value, but as a symbol of the struggles between town and religious house they had been given renewed importance.

## 8.6 The Glendower Revolt

Though the outbreak of the Glendower revolt in 1400 was sparked by a local issue, it took place within the context of longstanding Welsh discontent with English rule. This overflowed with the outbreak of rebellion, and an initial dispute between Owain Glendower and Reynold Grey of Ruthin was quickly subsumed into a larger revolt, and in September 1400 Glendower led his supporters through north Wales, sacking English settlements (Davies 1995, 92–103). The clandestine nature of the Glendower revolt means that the documentary sources are entirely from the English point of view. Glendower's forces relied more on surprise than attritional tactics – guerrilla warfare rather than fully invested sieges. The result is that in some cases relatively small groups of soldiers could capture key points as was the case at Conway Castle, which was taken by 50 men (Davies 1995, 229–230). Though he had military support from France, Glendower did not have the resources to hold a larger number of castles once captured. As a result, the Welsh sieges of English held fortifications were often ineffective, and on occasions where they did capture a castle it rarely stayed under Welsh control for long. Of the castles which fell to Glendower, very few were held for extended periods (Davies 1995, 236–237).

Guerrilla warfare often portrayed as 'economic terrorism, intended to impoverish a land, intimidate the inhabitants, and supply the raiders (Davies 1995, 234-6). But this behaviour was not exclusive to the Welsh. Adam of Usk noted that in the autumn of 1401 the English

invading [north Wales] with a strong power, and utterly laying them waste, and ravaging them with fire, famine, and sword, left them a desert, not even sparing children or churches, nor the monastery of Strata Florida

Myers 1969, 189

Though scholars consider the rebels' inability to hold on to the castles they had gained as the key factor in deciding the outcome of the rebellion, the conflict affected more just castles. Based on documentary sources more than 40 towns (Fig. 8.6) were attacked by Glendower's men and many of the settlements were fired. Undoubtedly the documents do not cover all such instances. The countryside itself was included in this destruction: crops were burned and animals stolen (Soulsby 1983, 25). Newport Castle was attacked in 1402 but when income was collected from the lordship as a whole in 1406 the sums were so small as to not support the repairs at the castle (Davies 1995, 295).

The distribution map Fig. 8.6 shows the areas targeted by Owain fell into three groups. One grouping was in the north of Wales, encompassing towns founded by the English such as Beaumaris or Newborough, or with a built environment strongly shaped by the English with the introduction of a castles such as Rhuddlan, Holt, and of course Ruthin. The second group of towns

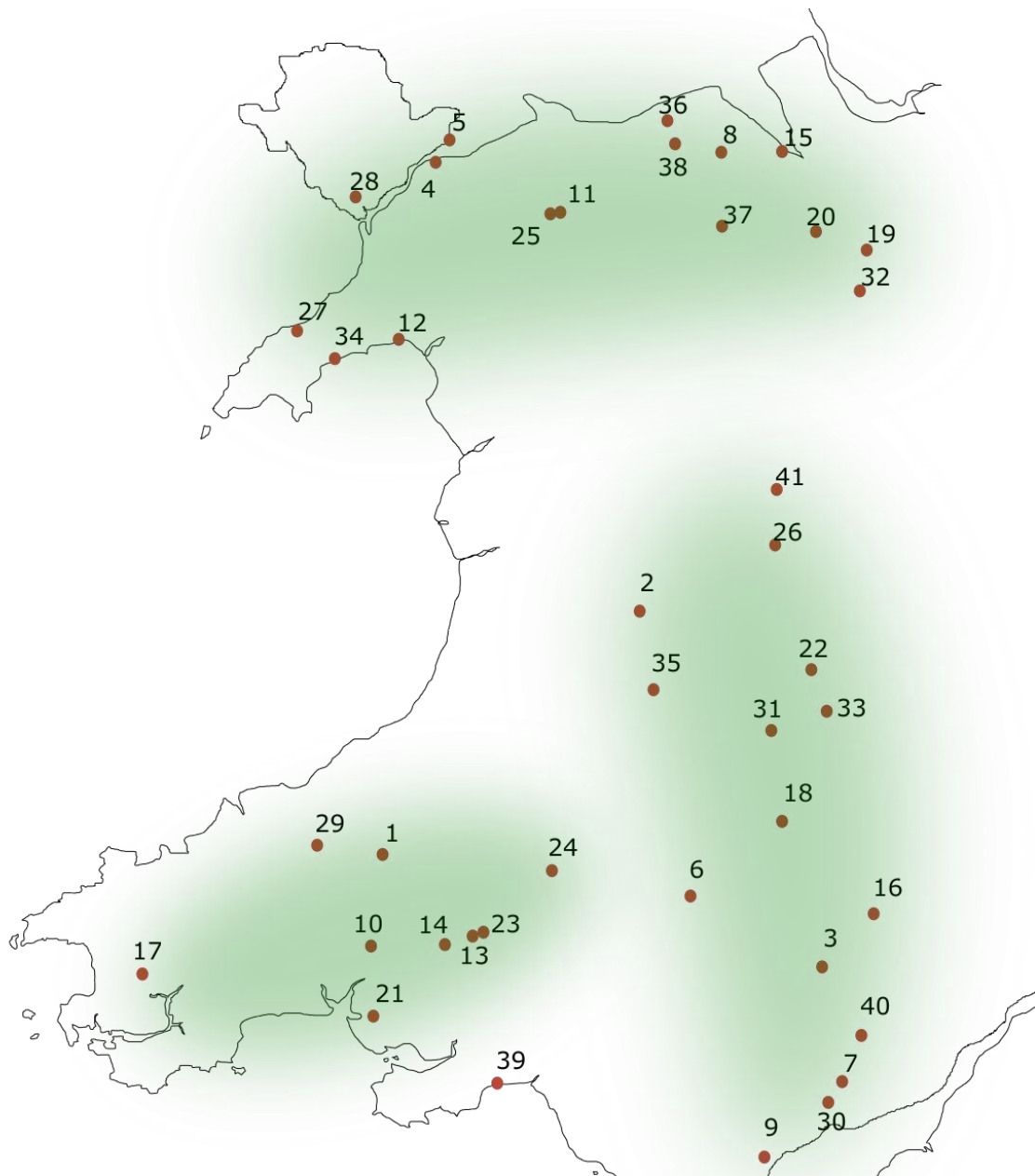


Fig. 8.6. Distribution of towns attacked by Owain Glendower. Based on the gazetteer of Welsh towns compiled by Soulsby (1983).

- |             |                  |               |               |                    |
|-------------|------------------|---------------|---------------|--------------------|
| 1 Adpar     | 2 Llanidloes     | 3 Abergavenny | 4 Bangor      | 5 Beaumaris        |
| 6 Brecon    | 7 Caerleon       | 8 Caerwys     | 9 Cardiff     | 10 Carmarthen      |
| 11 Conwy    | 12 Cricieth      | 13 Dinefwr    | 14 Dryslwyn   | 15 Flint           |
| 16 Grosmont | 17 Haverfordwest |               | 18 Hay-on-Wye | 19 Holt            |
| 20 Hope     | 21 Kidwelly      | 22 Knighton   | 23 Llandeilo  | 24 Llandovery      |
| 25 Llanrwst | 26 Montgomery    | 27 Nefyn      | 28 Newborough | 29 Newcastle Emlyn |
| 30 Newport  | 31 New Radnor    | 32 Overton    | 33 Presteigne | 34 Pwllheli        |
| 35 Rhayader | 36 Rhuddlan      | 37 Ruthin     | 38 St Asaph   | 39 Swansea         |
| 40 Usk      | 41 Welshpool     |               |               |                    |

clustered along the Anglo-Welsh border, again they were settlements under English influence such as Welshpool, Newport, and Montgomery. The third group was in the south west of Wales. The northern cluster includes four of the five towns attacked in 1400; this is unsurprising since the rebellion broke out in the north, with Glendower's home of Sycharth located in the north east of the country. Attacks continued in the area into 1404, while along the Anglo-Welsh border aside from an early attack on Hay-on-Wye assaults on towns in this area only began in 1402. This would appear to be a response to the English invasion of north Wales, with the result being that the Welsh rebels expanded their area of activity and inflicted damage on towns close to English both in terms of geography and culturally. Of the nine sites making up the south west cluster six were attacked in 1403; whereas the other two groups have more sites evenly distributed chronologically, the difference may be down to the simple fact that south west Wales was further from marcher areas where English culture permeated Welsh society. The map charts the progress of the revolt from a matter of regional importance to one which engulfed the whole of Wales and saw issues of identity played out on a national stage.

At the time of the revolt Ruthin was owned by Reginald Lord Grey. Three near contemporary chronicles emphasise the importance of Ruthin in the conflict. The anonymous *Dieulacres Chronicle*, which was written before 1413 and described Owain Glendower as an 'evil-doer and rebel', highlighted the destruction he caused, recounting that he 'plundered and burned English townships in Wales, more specifically, Conway, Ruthin and Oswestry and others walled and bare' (Marchant 2014, 2). The *Historia Vitae*, also written before 1413 by an unknown hand, recorded Glendower 'attacked and plundered then entirely burned a certain town in Wales, by the name of Rithyn, which was under the dominion of the said Lord de Grey' (Marchant 2014, 110). Thomas Walsingham's *Historia Anglicana*, written in the first quarter of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, remarked that Owain revolted 'laying waste [Reginald Lord Grey's] possessions with fires and slaying many of his household too cruelly and savagely' (Marchant 2014, 220). These accounts contrast with the conclusion drawn by modern historian R. Ian Jack who declares that 'little damage was done, although the townsfolk [of Ruthin] were robbed of goods alleged to be worth over £2,000' (Jack 2004b).

Little is known of the extent and character of the town of Ruthin (Denbighshire) before the English conquest of Wales in the late 13<sup>th</sup> century. Clwyd Powys Archaeological Trust (2014, 1) speculates it may have been 'a Welsh settlement of some size', but notes it was unlikely to have a church before the English established a presence. The castle existed by 1282 when Edward I granted it, and the lordship of Ruthin, to Reginald de Grey (RCAHMCWM 1914, 178). Around the same time a mill was established. This was an economic assertion of lordship as it was supplied from a millpond contained within the castle (Hankinson & Silverster 2012, 117). This is similar to Launceston (Cornwall) where the location of the mill within the outer edges of a deer park and in close proximity to the castle '[obliged] the peasantry to enter a tangibly seigneurial zone' (Creighton forthcoming, 324). St Peter's Church in Ruthin dates from the mid-13<sup>th</sup> to the mid-14<sup>th</sup> century based on its Decorated Gothic architecture (Silverster 1998, 6). A market was held in the church square on Mondays (Letters 2007). While these are broadly contemporary, in 1310 the monastery of St Peter's was founded; though the site is unknown it is suggested to be within the town of Ruthin, just south-west of the church (Silverster *et al.* 2011, 26). It descended through the heirs of Reynold de Grey into the late 15<sup>th</sup> century (Jack 2004a).

The town itself was embedded within a larger seigneurial landscape. The 'park of Ruthin' is recorded in 1324 when three people were fined for fowling at night (Smith 2014, 231). The fact they were perusing ducks indicates the presence of ponds, no doubt also used for fish (S.G. Smith 2015, pers. comm.). Indeed Wiles (2016, 34–35) identifies a 7,200m<sup>2</sup> pool south-east of the castle. In addition, Coidmarchan deer park possibly dates from the medieval period and is located close to Ruthin Castle (RCAHMW 2015). If this was part of the Ruthin's lordly landscape, this would make it a rare example. In the 200 years following 1066 some 50 parks were established in Wales, contrasting with around 3,000 in England (Rotherham 2007, 80, citing Rackham 1986). This would make parks a part of a typically English landscape. Not only would the park at Ruthin have been seen as a lordly area with restricted access, but it was an example of Reginald Lord Grey's English extraction.

The foundation of the castle, church, and market created an axis of lordship running north-south through the town. The link between the castle and

mill showed that the lords were not simply in control of the high-status buildings at Ruthin, but were responsible for the apparatus of daily life and subsistence. The castle provided physical protection, the church spiritual protection, and the mill sustenance. Further afield, the ponds would have been a source of food, while the park would have acted as a badge of social status, as well as potentially contributing to the economy.

The documentary sources do not mention the castle at Ruthin. Given that the contemporary chronicles often mentioned sieges and assaults on castles – often as an opportunity to denigrate Glendower’s character (Marchant 2014, 108–109) – it is improbable that they would have commented on the destruction inflicted on the town and not mention the castle unless it had not fallen to the Welsh. This provides an instructive context for the destruction of Ruthin. With the castle beyond the reach of the Welsh, they turned their focus towards other attributes of lordship. Adam of Usk specifically mentions that the animals from the lordship of Ruthin were taken by Owain’s men, including them as part of the ‘riches of the land’ (Marchant 2014, 193). The mention of livestock is significant as it is evidence of an important means of opposing authority. The landscape was ordered to keep unwanted people out and to enclose the animals. Stealing Reginald Lord Grey’s property in this way completely undermined the point of lordship and caused Owain’s rival to lose face.

Ruthin was developed by the English and ruled by an English lord. Had it been a town with a strongly Welsh background, it is unlikely the town would have been treated in the same way. Towns such as Ruthin and Aberystwyth – whose castle was successfully besieged – were centres of the English administration (Marchant 2014, 6). In the same way that the Welsh under Madog ap Llywelyn attacked embryonic centres of administration such as Caernarfon in 1294 (Taylor 1986, 85), the revolt of Owain Glendower specifically targeted places that were key to controlling the country. This was not the first time Ruthin was fired. The Welsh were discontented with the rule of the Greys and in 1322, after an unsuccessful attack on the castle they burned part of the town (Jack 1961, 198). Then as in 1400 the town suffered because of its links to an English lord. In 1407 Reginald Lord Grey himself applied to the king for a murage grant to fund the construction of a ditch around the town. Typically, castles are interpreted as private fortifications, while towns walls are



maintained by the town to which they belonged. The truth of the matter is rather more complex, with some castles being public in some respects and town walls sometimes being under the control of the king (Creighton & Higham 2005, 250). Ruthin marks one of the cases which challenge the assumption that town walls were public defences. The grant specifically mentions Reynold Grey was the applicant and looking to protect the town from the Welsh. This was clearly in reaction to the destruction caused by Glendower's men in 1400. This was the first step of the process of recovery. Whereas the park at Ruthin had been disparked by the rebels the town was enclosed to give the inhabitants security. It was necessary to re-establish the tools of administration as demonstrated by the creation of a new court house. Dendrochronological testing on the courthouse's timbers indicates it was built around 1421 (CPAT 2014, 4).

After initial expeditions to repress the revolt were unsuccessful, due in part to limited funds hampering and long-term strategy, the English began fighting a defensive war. One notable exception to this rule was an attack led by Henry, Prince of Wales. In May 1403 he aimed at the heart of Owain Glendower's property. Glendower owned Sycharth Castle, which was immortalised in verse by contemporary poet Iolo Goch. Importantly it was simply the castle which Goch focused on, but every aspect of the landscape which emphasised prosperity and Glendower's role as lord.

Each part full, each house in the court  
Orchard, vineyard and whitefort.  
The famed hero's rabbit park...  
And in another, even more  
Vivid park, the deep pasture...  
A fine mill on strong water,  
A stone dovecote on a tower.  
A fishpond, walled and private,  
Into which you cast your net  
And (no question of it) bring  
To land fine pike and whiting.  
A lawn with birds for food on,  
Peacocks and sprightly heron...  
No hunger, disgrace or death,  
Or ever thirst at Sycharth.

Quoted in Liddiard 2005, 116–117

The lines 'no hunger, disgrace or death, or ever thirst at Sycharth' offer insight into the ideal setting of a medieval landscape. This was what Glendower sought to extend to all of Wales and by attacking Sycharth the English undermined this idea. Wiles (2016, 26, 38) has examined the extent of the landscape features at Sycharth and assessed that elements such as the deer park and fishponds were too small to produce substantial quantities of food, and their importance in the landscape lay in their symbolism as identifiers of status and for creating a seigneurial landscape.

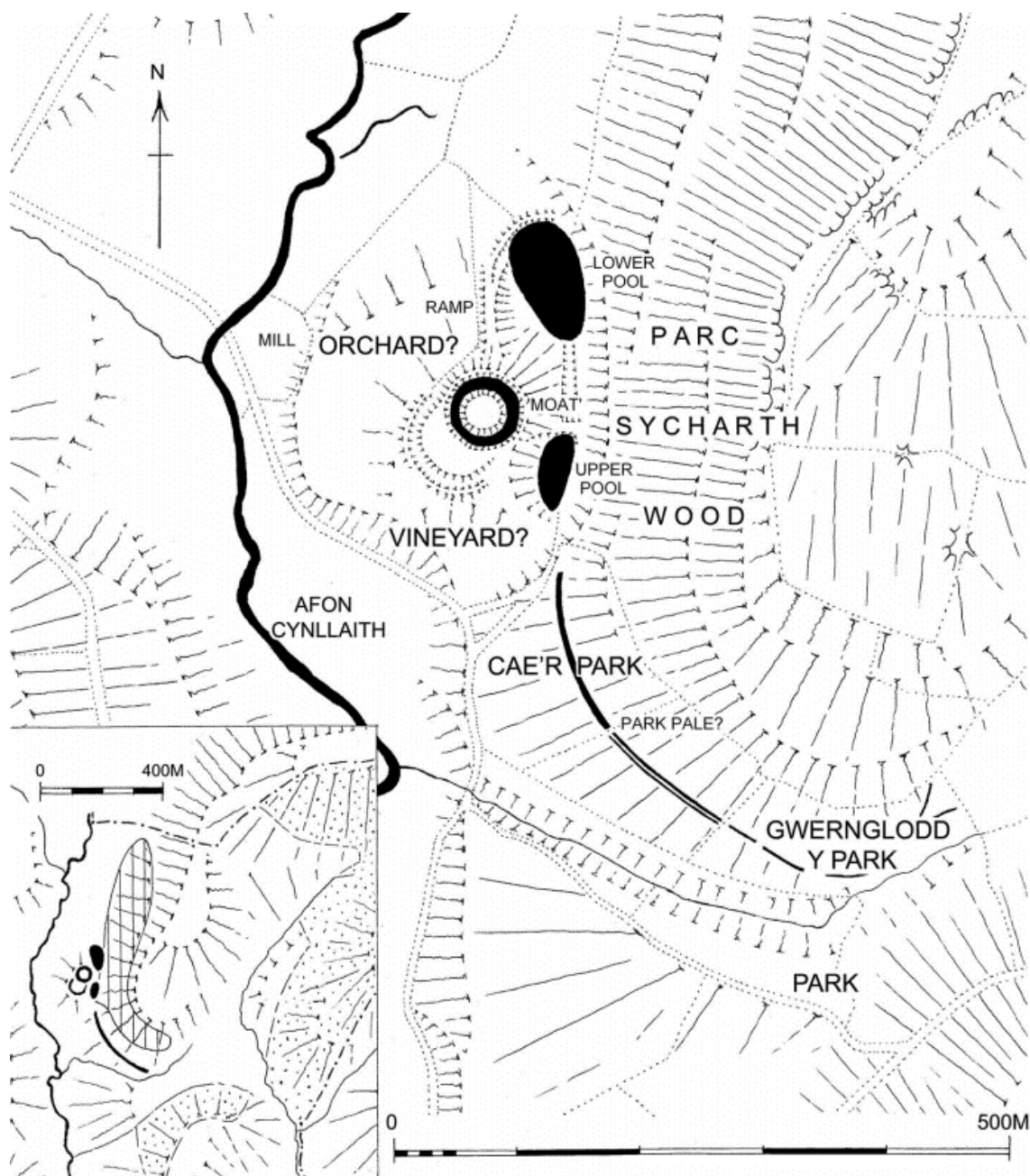


Fig. 8.7. Sycharth Castle's landscape context, with the vineyard immediately south of the castle, an orchard northwest, pools east and northeast, and parks to the south and east. From Wiles 2016, 26.

The first of Prince Henry's six surviving letters from the conflict document his activities at Sycharth. Excavations at Sycharth in the 1960s corroborated this destruction event (Hague & Warhurst 1966, 118, 125). On arriving at Sycharth the prince burned the unmanned castle, having expected to find Glendower there (Flood 1889, 128). This parallels the activity during 'the Anarchy': when a force set out to capture a specific person and failed they would often cause havoc in the landscape. This partly may have been to atone for failing to complete their aims, but if directed towards the demesne of the person they sought would also have had the effect of diminishing their support within their territory. At Sycharth the destruction extended beyond the castle walls. The homes of his tenants were set on fire and the prince travelled to nearby Glendourdy where a lodge within Glendower's park was burned (Flood 1889, 129). Again there is the act of trespassing against an opponent's property. Parks in Wales were uncommon in comparison to England, meaning that breaking into two in this conflict is especially significant. The damage to Glendower's reputation caused by losing his castle to fire would have been further compounded by the ruin of his park. Both were symbols of lordship and in a short time he was deprived of both by the English. It has been suggested that the attack on Sycharth was intended to encourage Glendower to face Prince Henry in battle, but as Wiles (2016, 41–42) notes, the attack potent for its destruction of the symbols of Glendower's lordship.

The sheriff of Herefordshire asked Prince Henry to lead another raid into Wales in 1404 so the Welsh would turn their attention away from Herefordshire and Gloucestershire. Though correspondence from the prince indicates he acted on the plea, it is not documented in the same way as the attack on Sycharth (Davies 1995, 247). The key difference was the nature of the target. Attacking Glendower's own powerbase was an event to be celebrated. Though he remained a thorn in the side of the English monarchy, he had been proven incapable of defending his own property and household. Glendower styled himself as heir of Gwynedd in an attempt to align himself with the dynasty that had once provided Welsh princes (Davies 1995, 160–161). For someone who claimed to be of the same dynasty as Llywelyn the Last, and was challenging English rule, to have the place where his control should have been strongest destroyed by the English was a terrible blow to his reputation.

Along with the Black Death, the revolt of Owain Glendower is held as one of two transformative events in the narrative of decline in Welsh urbanism in the 14<sup>th</sup> century (Soulsby 1983, 25–26). Cardiff, Caernarfon, Kidwelly, Swansea, and Usk were all attacked and severely damaged by Glendower's men, along with many other settlements. Towns were part of the landscape of English rule, and Connors' (2013, 405) study of Monmouthshire's medieval landscape found that the majority of the county was Welsh while lordships such as Usk formed key areas of English control, with a corresponding impact on the landscape in the immediate area, often in the use of open field systems. The sheer number of towns attacked indicates that English rule was a particularly urban phenomenon.

While urban communities suffered, at the heart of the conflict were two elite landscapes. Ruthin and Sycharth were the seats of their respective lords and in both cases the parks were deliberately broken into. Breaking into the park was an act of opposition, consciously subverting a landscape which belonged to someone else and inflicting damage. The message conveyed by the perpetrators of this act was that they did not recognise the authority of the landowner. At Ruthin and Sycharth it was part of a wider programme of destruction, intended to undermine the authority of the lord as much as possible. For Glendower this was exacerbated by the slighting of Sycharth, but equally at Ruthin the presence of the castle failed to prevent Glendower's men sacking the town. This would have been almost as damaging as the castle itself being destroyed.

## **8.7 Conclusion**

The concept of *jus in bello*, justice in war, was to ensure the appropriate conduct of those involved in warfare. This was based on the principles of proportionality and discrimination. Medieval leaders sometimes laid down rules preventing their soldiers from pillaging and destruction. There is, however, plenty of documentary evidence suggesting this was unsuccessful, or at the very least it was not always a concern. On a theoretical level, the general populace was supposed to be excluded from acts of war, though as can be seen after the battle of Lincoln in 1141 there was a convention that towns would sometimes be sacked after battle. The reality is that this theory, embedded in

the chivalric code, was often challenged in times of war. Looting and destruction could prove a hindrance to an opposing force, and directly challenged the authority of the local lord.

The Church was meant to be governed by different conditions. For example, in Edward III's chevauchée of 1336 it was noted that while the countryside was burned, a church was deliberately left unharmed out of reverence (Lynch 2014, 73). Certainly, the chroniclers of 'the Anarchy' and the Peasants' Revolt evidently felt the Church and her property should be exempt from the fighting. This is particularly clear in the 12<sup>th</sup>-century conflict, where tales of those who looted churches or desecrated holy ground met divine retribution. By turning these events into morality lessons, the Church reclaimed their authority. In practice churches remained targets due to their wealth and sometimes due to military expediency. Whilst damaging property belonging to the church would have been considered taboo, this was perhaps not the case for the Hospitallers because of their military links. For example, Nicholson (2007, 233) notes Thomas Walsingham described the order's prior, Robert Hales, as a knight rather than a cleric. Chroniclers of 'the Anarchy' criticised the bishop of Lincoln for his taking an active role in the conflict and fortifying castles, including that at Newark (Nottinghamshire). While the crusades may have altered perceptions of clerics and priests as soldiers of God, the way Hales was treated by Walsingham and the peasants themselves would indicate in the late 14<sup>th</sup> century military orders were not seen as genuinely religious. More generally there were growing tensions at the time between the church and its tenants (Nicholson 2007, 228). The result was that many religious houses were attacked during the revolt. The chronicles of 'the Anarchy' make frequent references to people storing their valuables in churches for safe keeping, indicating it was felt that religious property would generally be excluded from the conflict. While this was not always the case, it was viewed poorly if there were transgressions against churches.

Events such as trespassing or parkbreaking are difficult to establish archaeologically. Animal bone survival might indicate a different way of dealing with carcasses, indicating whether they were disarticulated in the park or taken away to be work on in secret, but tying this with particular events is helped by documentary evidence. The landscape of 'the Anarchy' is frequently compared

to a desert during the war, deliberately compared with a lush, productive land before hostilities broke out. While this is in part metaphorical, emphasising that while civil war raged England could not prosper, the chronicles give specific instances where crops were destroyed, animals stolen, and the country left in turmoil. This became increasingly common as siege warfare dragged on. In part this tactic contributed to a war of attrition by destroying supplies, but it also fitted into the political discourse of the period. Both sides engaged in war upon the land and did so to show that the other side could not adequately defend what they laid claim to. Equally, these acts were condemned because of the suffering they caused to the general populace, and this could serve to undermine the legitimacy of the pretenders to the throne. How could either Matilda or Stephen claim to be the rightful heir to Henry I if either of them knowingly caused harm to the people they were meant to rule? This particular aspect was absent from the Peasants' Revolt and the Glendower Rising and in neither case were those rebelling against the English crown asserting that they should replace it. While the leaders of the Peasants' Revolt claimed to support the king but want his advisors removed, Glendower wanted a Wales free of English rule. At no point did either of these two groups have to be concerned about public perception if they harmed their own people.

With castles usually out of reach to the Peasants' Revolt attention turned to other means of expressing anger. Had they been able to capture castles belonging to John of Gaunt, as was feared would be the case at Leicester, they would no doubt have attempted slighting. Instead they attacked unfortified buildings, burned administrative records, and broke into parks. Collectively these acts were intended not just to oppose authority but to actively subvert it. By entering parks without permission, they were claiming for common use what they felt they needed. It was in fact possible that if a landlord did not exert control over his parks and prosecute those who trespassed there, the crown would take control of the parks. Destruction was a very public event: the burning of documents in 1381 was often conducted at communal meeting places such as the main road through a settlement or a green or square where available in more populated areas (Justice 1994, 150). The destruction of the Savoy serves as another example of a large community gathering and engaging in destruction. It was important not just for the damage to take place but for it to be

viewed by others as an indication of the owner's changing status. The importance of the visualisation of the revolt is further emphasised by the way the heads of Simon Sudbury, Robert Hales, William Appleton, and John Legge were paraded around London after they had been executed then displayed on London Bridge (Oman 1969, 67). Destruction of property, person, and landscape features was a highly symbolic act performed in the public sphere.

Finally, in the Glendower Revolt elite landscapes were the setting of two key episodes of the conflict. The spark which caused the armed rising was over rights to land. Both Glendower and Reginald Lord Grey asserted their claim. It is therefore unsurprising the tactics used by Glendower when attacking the town of Ruthin was to challenge his opponent's authority. By destroying the means of production (the mill), homes, and the park itself Glendower was dismantling the aspects of the landscape which supported the concept that Reginald Lord Grey held sway. In these three conflicts a recurring theme has been that if castles could not be slighted, damaging the landscape was an acceptable alternative.

The definition of slighting outlined in the introduction to this thesis was deliberately broad, including the building itself as well as its landscape and its contents. This last aspect became particularly relevant in relation to understanding the Peasants' Revolt. In medieval society anger was usually associated with those with power in society and was a tool of social control; where contemporary literature portrayed the anger of medieval peasants it depicted them as a destructive force but are fundamentally 'unreasoning brutes' in the words of John Gower's *Vox clamantis* (Freedman 1998, 177–178). This contrasts with the concept of 'righteous anger' associated with the social elite (Barton 1998, 169–170). It was evidently against societal norms for peasants to respond to a situation with violence, which is what makes the destruction caused by the Peasants' Revolt so significant. Moreover, it was demonstrably not random violence, but carefully targeted against certain individuals, institutions, and those responsible for carrying out local administration. Through an analysis of the destruction caused by the conflict this thesis offers an insight into the empowerment of a traditionally disenfranchised segment of medieval society.

## Chapter 9 – Creating chaos from order

### 9.1 Introduction

This thesis set out to enhance our understanding of castle slighting and its role in the Middle Ages through the use of archaeological evidence. Through the meticulous reassessment of excavation reports and surveys we have progressed from a state in which previous scholarship placed overriding emphasis on the military motive for the destruction of a castle (see ‘Approaches to slighting’ in Chapter 2 for an overview of previous approaches) towards a nuanced approach which incorporates political and social motives. By bringing this information together for the first time this thesis presents an evidence-based understanding of slighting and its role within medieval society.

An important step for this thesis was to examine what is meant by ‘slighting’. Previous definitions have focused on preventing castles from being used as fortifications in the narrow sense of whether they could be garrisoned. As discussed in Chapter 1.5, this thesis interprets slighting as the degradation of its value. Value includes all the various uses of a castle: military, social, administrative, and all their intersections. This incorporates the military role of the castle, which was not just to be a stronghold during war but to embody the military strength of its owner. The person carrying out the slighting might damage a castle to prevent another from using it, and that use should be understood broadly as castles were multifunctional. A castle might also be slighted as an act of punishment, in which the value of the castle – perhaps as a potential place of resistance and also as an expression of identity – was removed.

Castle slighting is a subject that cannot be fully understood without the use of archaeological evidence and many of the sites discussed in this thesis have little or no documented history. As such archaeological evidence plays a vital role in challenging previous narratives around slighting and developing a new understanding of this phenomenon. The approach to investigate the archaeology of castles and the associated landscape allows for a greater appreciation of how castles functioned in medieval society, and the impact slighting could have on local communities. This study is not just a contribution to castle studies, but an examination of how medieval power and identity shaped



high-status buildings and their associated landscapes. The themes discussed here are transferable to other contexts, such as the Dissolution of the Monasteries, and can inform the understanding of destruction as a phenomenon beyond England, Wales and Scotland, and even beyond the Middle Ages.

## **9.2 The chronology and geography of slighting**

This thesis' first research priority was to establish the chronology and geography of castle slighting and to establish which elements of castles were targeted for destruction. As has already been noted in Chapters 4, 5, and 6 this is an examination of the archaeological evidence for slighting, rather than a survey of every single slighted castle. The intention in emphasising archaeological evidence was to establish a dataset of sites where slighting could be confidently identified.

Of the sites discussed in Chapters 4, 5, and 6, only Weston Turville (Buckinghamshire) may have been slighted in the late 11<sup>th</sup> century. This dating is based on pottery in the ditch fill marking the destruction event which could date from the late 11<sup>th</sup> or early 12<sup>th</sup> century; the excavator interpreted the slighting as dating to 1173/74 which corresponds with orders from Henry II to demolish the castle, though as explained in Chapter 4 I suggest this corrupts the archaeological data to fit with the documentary record. Based on the data compiled for this thesis, a destruction date in the 11<sup>th</sup> century would be unusual, though there were social upheavals which make it a possibility. The succession crisis of 1088 was fought between William Rufus and Robert Curthose, and though there is no documentary evidence that it resulted in the slighting of any castles it would fit with the narrative of slighting being used to assert control. Indeed, at this time Weston Turville was owned by Odo, sub-infeudated to a man recorded only as Robert. It is therefore possible that this is the earliest example of castle slighting in England. The important castles of Pevensey and Rochester were used by Bishop Odo in support of Robert Curthose's unsuccessful attempt to become King of England. Robert held no castles in England, but Odo was exiled and his property in England confiscated (Bates 2004; Thompson 2004). It is probable that Pevensey and Rochester were

spared destruction because they were important fortifications along the coast and would be useful if Robert attempted an invasion.

Cases of 12<sup>th</sup>-century slighting are almost exclusive to England (with the exception of Ingleston Motte in Scotland which has been dated to 1185 based on documentary rather than archaeological evidence) and are mostly found in the southern half of the country (Fig. 6.9a). This coincides with two periods of civil war in England, the Anarchy and the rebellion of 1173–74. The former dominates most discussions of castle slighting, with particular emphasis on the destruction of so-called ‘adulterine castles’. This is exemplified by M.W. Thompson (1987a, 207) who wrote ‘Demolition of castles was frequent in early periods, notably of the ‘adulterine castles’ by Henry II, and was to recur later in the [17<sup>th</sup>-century] Civil War’. Much of the fragmentary discussions of slighting in the past have emphasised the reaction to ‘the Anarchy’ at the expense of other social contexts. According to the *Gesta Stephani* (trans. Potter 1976, 241) when the two warring factions agreed peace in 1153 it was “firmly settled that arms should be finally laid down and peace restored everywhere in the kingdom, [and] the new castles demolished”. This agreement, the Treaty of Wallingford,<sup>7</sup> was formalised in a charter signed at Westminster, however the slighting of castles built during the conflict was one of two points specifically mentioned by both the *Gesta Stephani* and Robert of Torigny, another contemporary chronicler, that were not included in the final charter (Holt 1994, 291–293, 297). Of the 28 castles in this study which were likely slighted in the 12<sup>th</sup> century (including Weston Turville), Castle Cary, Danes Castle, Desborough, Farnham, Pleshey, Radcot, Saffron Walden, and Wareham can be reasonably linked to the Anarchy through either documentary evidence or, if the castle is not explicitly mentioned, through inference from other events. This is the case with Danes Castle near Exeter: though no siege castle was mentioned in the chronicles recounting the siege of Exeter, the pottery evidence from the site indicates a 12<sup>th</sup>-century date and the siege of 1136 is the most likely context. The eight sites slighted because of the Anarchy is only slightly more than the six linked to the revolt of 1173–74 based on documentary evidence: Bungay, Dudley, Framlingham, Groby, Leicester, South Mimms. Though the two conflicts are considerably different in duration, the number of sites that can be securely

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<sup>7</sup> Also referred to as the Treaty of Winchester.

linked to each is similar and suggests that we should be wary of being too eager to associate an instance of slighting in the 12<sup>th</sup> century with the Anarchy. For the other 14 sites identified through archaeological evidence as being slighted in the 12<sup>th</sup> century the evidence is not precise enough to identify a particular conflict. Pottery is typically the main form of evidence for this period and does not allow close enough dating. Documentary evidence can therefore be very useful for a study of castle slighting, and it indicates that while most slighting took place after the conclusion of the civil war – restoring the country to its state before the death of Henry I, even if not enshrined in the final charter sealing the peace – several castles were slighted during the conflict. The *Gesta Stephani* (trans. Potter 1976, 141) records that in 1142 King Stephen “arrived unexpectedly at Cirencester ... Finding the castle empty ... he gave it to devouring flames, and after demolish[ed the] rampart and stockade to the foundations”. However, the Gloucestershire HER (Gloucestershire County Council 2017) notes that the castle has not been excavated, and its precise location is uncertain. The *Gesta Stephani* (trans. Potter 1976, 201) also recounts the siege of Coventry in 1147: Matilda’s supporters created a siege castle near Coventry where Stephen himself was based, however the king “at length obtained the surrender of the earl’s castle and demolished it”. While the majority of slighting took place after the conflict, it was evidently not restricted to the aftermath of war.

What this study has shown is that this focus should be treated with caution as for many castles the archaeological dating evidence is not precise enough to pinpoint a single conflict. The 12<sup>th</sup> century was certainly an active period for castle slighting, especially within England but the wealth of contemporary chroniclers documenting ‘the Anarchy’, and the resulting scholarly attention paid to the conflict, has dominated our understanding of slighting. Coulson (1994b, 71) notes that ‘Stephen, perhaps more than Henry II, was the great destroyer of illicit fortlets’, however, this reputation is not necessarily borne out by the archaeological evidence. Further fieldwork would provide more data, and Painter (1935, 322) identified 21 instances of castles that Henry II ‘razed’ based on documentary evidence.<sup>8</sup> It is therefore likely the

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<sup>8</sup> The list he gives is: Allington, Bennington, Birdsal-Mountferrant, Brackley, Bungay, Dudley, Framlingham, Groby, Hay, Huntingdon, Kinardferry, Kirby Malzeard, Leicester, Northallerton, Saffron Walden, Saltwood, Thetford, Thirsk, Tutbury, Walton, Weston Turville.

current body of evidence can be significantly enhanced by further excavation, not just for 'the Anarchy' but across the whole of the Middle Ages.

By comparison slighting in the 13<sup>th</sup> century is distributed between Wales and England, with a skew towards the former. In the 1250s and 1260s Llywelyn ap Gruffydd established his rule in Wales and sought an agreement with Henry III for the recognition and independence of Wales; in 1258 England and Wales agreed a truce, but Llywelyn wanted a longer lasting official peace (Smith 1998, 116–133). Conflict between Llywelyn and marcher lords came to a head in 1262 with marcher lords attacking Welsh lands. Henry III's struggles to control his barons meant that he was unable to ensure the marcher lords respected the truce with Llywelyn. Therefore, when Simon de Montfort led a rebellion in England against Henry III, Llywelyn was a useful ally and threatened Henry III on a separate front (Smith 1998, 146–154). It was within this context that Degannwy and Dyserth were captured and slighted in 1263, and archaeological excavations have provided evidence for a destruction date in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. The burning at Nantcribba was not dated archaeologically, but documentary sources indicate it was slighted in 1263. Builth and Cefnlllys may provide similar evidence as they were captured and slighted by Llywelyn's forces in 1260 and 1262 respectively, but neither site has been excavated (Smith 1998, 127; CPAT 2017a; CPAT 2017b). These sites form an interesting intersection of rebellion and war between nations. By exploiting the civil war in England, Llywelyn was able to undermine English rule in Wales, capturing and slighting several castles, hoping to eventually bring a favourable peace with the English king. For the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries, the link between slighting, rebellion, and high-status individuals asserting or reasserting power is evident.

In the 14<sup>th</sup> century slighting was most likely to occur in Scotland or northern England, especially in relation to the Scottish Wars of Independence; this has few parallels in England and Wales as Robert Bruce took an unusually pre-emptive approach to slighting. This is much more in-line with the traditional view of slighting, that it was intended to prevent an enemy from using fortifications. The two examples from England are unusual as Eynesford (Kent) is an example of a local dispute resulting in damage being inflicted on a castle, while at Weoley (Warwickshire) the context is unclear.

Castles slighted in the 15<sup>th</sup> century are few and far between, representing the overall trend of slighting becoming less common towards the end of the medieval period. It is unclear why this is as castles remained a significant focus of display and prestige, and conflicts such as the Wars of the Roses would have lent themselves to slighting's symbolism. However, even at this late stage, the symbolism of physically asserting authority through the destruction of property is evident. One such example is the slighting of Roxburgh Castle in 1460. James II of Scotland was killed when one of his own cannon exploded while besieging the English in Roxburgh. Though the explosion was an accident, the death was ultimately considered the fault of the English; therefore, when the castle and town surrendered the Scots slighted the castle. The castle had changed hands many times during conflicts between Scotland and England, and its continued existence was recognition of its importance both as a military site and a centre of administration. However, this changed with James II's death and if Roxburgh had been allowed to stand even under Scottish control it would become an emblem of his undoing. Its destruction was an act of retribution for the death of the King of Scotland.

The infrequency of castle slighting in England and Wales from the 14<sup>th</sup> century onwards can in part be attributed to the changing nature of royal power. Based on the documentary evidence, a large proportion of these events are associated with rebellion and the dynamics of royal authority. The 12<sup>th</sup> century saw Stephen and Matilda vie for the throne of England, and Henry the Young King assert his rule under Henry II. These led to bloody civil wars. John and Henry III both faced rebellions from their barons. By comparison, the conflicts of Edward I and Edward III's reigns were mostly with other countries rather than to secure their own throne. The deposition of Edward II was a different situation to the wars previously mentioned. He was unable to offer much resistance to the invasion led by his wife, Queen Isabella (Phillips 2004b), and there was little opposition to the new rule of his replacement, his son Edward III. This meant slighting was unnecessary as a means of control. This demonstrates that castle slighting could be contingent on whether a monarch faced rebellion during his reign. Of course, the slighting carried out by Robert Bruce accounts for another motivation – preventing castles being used by an enemy – but this makes up a smaller number of instances identified in the archaeological record.

However, the changing nature of royal power does not explain the lack of slighting during the Wars of the Roses in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. This may be attributable to the changing role of the castle and the way it was perceived. Liddiard (2005, 75) notes that 'detailed studies of the 1320s and the Wars of the Roses have shown that castles played only a minor role in military events'. In the 12<sup>th</sup> century the castle was an extension of the owner's strength and to have it taken away was extremely shameful, as demonstrated by the fact the Earl of Warwick reputedly died after being told Warwick Castle had been captured (Potter 1976, 155). Orderic Vitalis records after the battle of Tinchebray in 1106 fought between Henry I and his brother Robert Curthose, Duke of Normandy, the victorious king 'brought all his enemies low, and demolished the unlicensed castles that Robert and the factious lords had built' (*Historia Ecclesiastica* book XI, trans. Chibnall 1978, 99). It is abundantly clear the slighting of a castle significantly damaged the reputation and status of its owner. Lineage and the past gave legitimacy, as can be seen at Bothwell where a partial repair of the great tower may have been intended to maintain links with the site's history as it was slighted to prevent the English from using it rather than to punish the owner. The reduced status of a castle owner caused through slighting was often carried by their heirs. For example, the return of Pleshey and Saffron Walden to the Mandeville family was a signifier of the dynasty's restored status. In the later medieval and Tudor periods the castle was still a status symbol and used to project a 'martial face' bound up with concepts of masculinity (Johnson 2002). It is the intersection of military and domestic that defines the castle and makes slighting such a powerful act. Damaging a castle was a symbolic means of emasculating the owner, of demonstrating that he no longer had the ability to protect his own property and tenants. It also served to diminish an enemy by weakening one of their tools of control in martial, social, economic, and administrative terms. As the role of castles in medieval warfare changed, so did their role in society. They were still important, but no longer represented the pinnacle of medieval masculine identity. Once this symbolism shifted, the importance of slighting changed.

Looking at the castle as a whole, intra-mural areas were often included in the destruction, meaning the intention with slighting was not to simply remove the fortifications. Depictions of masonry castles in art emphasised the

battlements and arrowloops, some of the most instantly recognisable elements of castle architecture – all used to '[communicate] ideas of defence, of power and lordship' (Wheatley 2004, 2). Documentary references indicate that at Barnstaple and Bedford the walls were reduced in height (Baker *et al.* 1979a, 11; Cherry & Pevsner 1991, 152), leaving a highly visual reminder of the owner's fall from grace, though such instances are poorly attested in the fabric of standing buildings. Despite this, it shows the most visibly militarised aspect of the castle was sometimes diminished without being removed. Thus, where there is evidence for the outer defences of a castle being filled in or demolished the social implications should be considered. This would greatly undermine the military role of the castle, but the role of the castle in representing the strength of the owner was also important. This may account for why great towers feature so frequently in Chapter 4: they are the quintessential embodiment of the castle. They are the most prominent and visual structure within the castle and are outstanding examples of military architecture. Recent interpretations of donjons have discovered defensive weaknesses and emphasised their ceremonial roles; indeed, sites were sometimes chosen to ensure inter-visibility with landscape features such as gardens rather than commanding the greatest view of transport routes which would have been important had military functionality been the only consideration (Marshall 2002a; 2002b; Gregory & Liddiard 2016). As great towers were symbolically linked to power and status in the medieval world – and were outward identifiers of strength – slighting them was an effective means of punishing a miscreant, reasserting one's own power, and publicly demonstrating that the owner had been weakened and their standing and authority diminished.

### **9.3 Impact on the urban landscape**

Chapter 7 explored the impact of slighting on the urban landscape. Castles could be both destructive and constructive forces. Domesday Book records that 166 houses in Lincoln were cleared for the construction of the castle (Harfield 1991, 379), while in contrast 80% of the new towns founded in Wales before 1150 were next to castles demonstrating their role in fostering settlement (Drage 1987, 128).

Providing a bookend to this activity, Chapter 7 showed the removal of a castle had a similarly diverse impact on its associated settlement. The main factor was the importance of the town and its economic strength. A settlement reliant on its lord for development would struggle to grow following the removal of its castle, whereas shire towns were much more resilient. Within this broad picture there is evidence of the reuse of building material having social significance. At Bedford the stone from the castle was used to repair a church that had been damaged by the exiled owner of the fortification, using the material to restore justice to the town. As discussed in Chapter 7, St Albans provides an instructive parallel, albeit without a castle, where the repurposing of an object or its constituent parts was a highly political act and served to further diminish the previous owner.

An important conclusion for this study is that castle slighting rarely spilled over to the associated settlement. In warfare a force besieging a castle and settlement might sack the town on its capture, but this represented a different kind of activity to slighting and fell within the conventions of warfare. One such example is the aftermath of the siege of Oxford in 1142 recounted in the *Gesta Stephani* (trans. Potter 1976, 141) where King Stephen's soldiers 'made their way inside the walls without resistance and by throwing torches into the houses everywhere in the town won the fame of a glorious victory over their enemies'. While the *Gesta Stephani* is generally supportive of Stephen, the way it describes the burning of the town as a glorious victory shows that such an act was consistent with medieval warfare. In 1294, the Welsh rebelled against English rule and attacked Caernarfon; the castle was unfinished at the time, and the Welsh burned the town as well as causing damage to the town walls (Brown, Colvin & Taylor 1963a, 377). When a castle was deliberately damaged it was often a punitive act; the archaeological evidence shows that this punishment typically did not extend to directly damaging the town or its defences. Importantly, if the local community was made to suffer along with the owner of the castle they may be encouraged to support the owner. Because the town was rarely included in direct destruction, in the archaeological record the waning of a settlement due to slighting is very similar to the effects we would expect if a castle was abandoned fully. If, for example, Pleshey Castle had not been slighted in the 12<sup>th</sup> century but the de Mandeville family had abandoned it



in favour of Saffron Walden it is likely that the town would have followed a similar trajectory, failing to grow significantly as an economic centre.

#### **9.4 Beyond the castle gate: castles and landscapes**

Chapter 6 examined the wider lordly landscape through the lens of rebellion and civil war. Castle slighting was particularly common in these social contexts, but it is poorly understood how other properties and emblems of medieval lordship were treated. The clerics documenting ‘the Anarchy’ found attacks on churches abhorrent, and during the Peasants’ Revolt two centuries later property belonging to the church was frequently targeted due to its role as landlord. This is exemplified by the dispute between the abbey and townspeople at St Albans. For several decades the two parties had an uneasy relationship, and the Peasants’ Revolt was the catalyst for acts of destruction and a change in the balance of power. The townspeople destroyed gates to the abbot’s park, drained his fishpond, and broke into the abbey where they tore up the floor of the outer parlour – this was a significant act as it had been paved with quernstones confiscated from the townspeople in 1330 in a previous dispute about control of the local mill. Discourse in the medieval landscape concentrated on power relations. Parks, common land, and hunting played a prominent role in the Peasants’ Revolt and the Glendower Rising and were the scenes of defiant marches or at the forefront of disputes over land use.

During the Glendower Rising, the politics of identity shaped how the conflict developed. Ruthin, where the rising broke out, was a town in Wales with an English lord and developed by the English. Towns such as Beaumaris, Rhuddlan, and Newport were either founded or strongly influenced by the English, and as a result were amongst the towns attacked by Glendower’s men. The clandestine nature of the Peasants’ Revolt and the Glendower Rising meant the rebels had limited means to slight castles – it could be a complex process requiring great skill as demonstrated by the presence of Alnoth the engineer at Framlingham in 1174–75. While fire was a simpler method of destruction than picking, and far quicker than attempting to dismantle a building or break up earthworks, it was less effective against stone structures which were a feature of many castles by the late 14<sup>th</sup> and early 15<sup>th</sup> centuries. However, those involved in the Peasants’ Revolt and the Glendower Rising

were able to exercise their power in other ways. This was evident through their destructive treatment of lordly estates, administrative documents, and settlements belonging to the culture they were rebelling against. If slighting should be understood as a way for the social elite to reassert their authority destruction of the wider landscape was the tool of the disenfranchised to subvert that authority and undermine notions of power and control.

### **9.5 Destruction by numbers**

How many castles have been slighted is a question that can never fully be answered. This study has shown the importance of archaeology in establishing whether slighting took place and to what extent it was used. Moreover, excavations need to be large scale to fully understand how slighting was used. As we have seen at some sites later activity can obscure the archaeological record, if not obliterate it. This is the case at Degannwy, where multiple instances of slighting are documented in the historical record, but only the final instance from 1263 is identifiable archaeologically. Similarly, Edinburgh Castle was slighted by Robert Bruce, but intensive later use of the site has obscured this event in the archaeological record. With thousands of castles in England, Scotland, and Wales, finite resources simply do not permit a comprehensive excavation of each site. Therefore, it is significant that this study has identified 60 sites that can confidently be described as slighted based on the archaeological evidence, and often complemented by the historical record. It indicates other countries may have a wealth of information to add to destructionology and it is clear the nature of castles as elite architecture made their destruction highly significant.

Allen Brown (1959) created a list of 327 castles recorded in contemporary documents between 1154 and 1216 covering England and parts of Wales. Of these, 9.5% were recorded as demolished (with no distinction from slighting) during this period. Of the 782 castles in England with contemporary documentation (Appendix 3), 84 were slighted based on historical research (10.7%) (Nevell 2011). By comparison, of sites 492 sites across England, Wales and Scotland mentioned in the first 50 volumes of *Medieval Archaeology*, 34 provided archaeological evidence for slighting (6.9%) (Appendix 4). For England alone, the proportion rises to 8.7%. The lower percentage for sites mentioned in

*Medieval Archaeology* is likely because it covers the whole of the period where castle slighting took place in England, Wales, and Scotland (1066–1500), whereas Allen Brown's list concentrates on some of the most intensive years for castle slighting (1154–1216). The close grouping of these numbers shows that archaeological investigation and documentary research complement each other. The archaeological record is not under-reporting compared to the documentary sources, while the written material is not vastly exaggerating the impact of slighting when specific sites are named.

Medieval documentation is restricted in the information it provides; sources from royal administration – Close Rolls, Patent Rolls, and Pipe Rolls – typically focus on expenditure, so record castle slighting tangentially, or sometimes record instructions to slight castles. While this can provide a date, this does not mean that the instruction was carried out immediately, or even at all. For instance, King John ordered the destruction of Pevensey Castle in 1216, but the fabric of the building is ostensibly intact and there is no indication his instructions were acted on. Moreover, these sources only become common from the mid-12<sup>th</sup> century onwards, meaning an entire century of the story of castles in England are omitted. Cases of slighting from the 11<sup>th</sup> century in England, Wales, and Scotland are rare, but it seems we must rely almost entirely on excavation to provide evidence. Where royal records fail, chronicles may add information – particularly in relation to Wales and Scotland. However, chroniclers may exaggerate the extent of damage caused, or even the number of sites involved. Writing in the 12<sup>th</sup>-century, the monk Robert of Torigni notoriously claimed that after 'the Anarchy' 'concerning those castles which had come into being since the death of the king; their number was said to be more than 1,115 and they were to be destroyed' (*Chronicle of Robert of Torigni*, edited by Howlett 1889, 177). This number is obviously an exaggeration, but it is still sometimes used as evidence for enthusiastic castle building during 'the Anarchy'. On occasion a chronicler might recount that all the castles belonging to a particular figure were slighted, but this implies knowledge of all their property whereas the reality may be that the lower-status castles or those which were strategically important were left intact. The chroniclers had no interest in recording which parts of a castle were slighted, and only in exception cases is it recorded in the royal records. This information helps us understand how

intensive slighting actually was and how castles in the medieval period functioned within society. Archaeological investigation is essential to acquire this information. However, dating material recovered from excavation has rarely allowed close dating, and destruction events are often related to documented history. Neither archaeological nor historical sources should be treated in isolation and the multi-disciplinary approach used in this thesis seeks to arrive at a new and richer understanding of castle slighting.

It is therefore reasonable to conclude that not only is slighting typically associated with rebellion – though of course not always, as demonstrated by the campaign of Robert Bruce – but we can approach an estimate for how many castles were slighted. In England, there is enough evidence to indicate that around 9% of castles were slighted in the Middle Ages. For Wales this proportion may be lower. It is difficult to estimate the figures for Scotland as the understanding of this area remains under-developed. Important sites such as Edinburgh and Stirling were purportedly slighted by Robert Bruce, but the limited archaeological investigations at these sites have not produced conclusive evidence of slighting.

Out of the 41 castles where there is some evidence for whole carried out the slighting (Appendix 1), 31 (76%) were ordered by the king or other royalty. With little indication for who ordered the slighting of the other 19 (24%) sites it is possible a greater proportion may represent castles slighted by barons as less documentary evidence survives from this group. Appealing as this speculation is, it is difficult to substantiate. The documentary record remains important when attempting to attribute slighting to an individual.

## **9.6 The many faces of slighting**

While Scotland is under-represented in this thesis, the campaign of Robert Bruce is an important addition to our understanding of castle slighting. It offers proof that slighting could be used to prevent an enemy from using a fortification. Such activity is unattested in Wales and rare in England, restricted to a single incident from King John's reign where he ordered the destruction of Pevensey in 1216 in anticipation of a French invasion.

The act of slighting is as varied as the castles discussed in this thesis. There are stark examples of total destruction at Bedford and Degannwy, and

cases where it was a token act, such as Barnstaple. When the social significance of the act outweighed the military aspect, the event could be significantly delayed. In 1180 a fine was issued to the owner of Owston Castle (Lincolnshire) because it had not been pulled down despite a royal order being issued four years earlier (Renn 1968, 271). The fact destruction could be deferred complicates interpretation of individual sites. In some cases, slighting may have taken place years after the order, or even not taken place at all; when recorded in chronicles, the event may have been exaggerated for narrative effect. Therefore, documentary references to slighting need to be corroborated by archaeological investigation where possible and cannot simply be taken at face value. While this introduces some complications with precise dating of individual instances of slighting, as the archaeological evidence alone infrequently allows for close dating of the destruction event, this does not prevent interpretation of the overall pattern. However, it serves as a reminder to be cautious when linking events in the archaeological record with those in documented history.

### **9.7 Slighting as punishment: destruction over confiscation**

In a number of cases, slighting is clearly linked to rebellion, such as the revolt of Henry II's sons in 1173–74. It then becomes important to ask why slighting was chosen over confiscation of property? Removing property from the hands of a rebel served to punish them; it could also be used to reward a loyal supporter. After the capture of Bedford Castle in 1224, the previous owner asked Henry III to return the castle to his keeping. Instead, the king ordered the total destruction of the site. The issue is succinctly encapsulated by Juhel, lord of Mayenne, in the early 12<sup>th</sup> century. He recounts a dispute with one of his vassals in which 'having become greatly angered with him, I said he was my serf and I was able to sell him or burn his land, or give it to whomever I might want' (excerpt trans. Barton 1998, 153). This represents the three main avenues available when punishing someone. A king could not sell a magnate who had displeased him but might imprison him. The destruction of property was more socially meaningful than confiscation. The list of Angevin castles compiled by Allen Brown (1959) shows that in this period confiscation was more than three times as common as 'destruction' (assuming this at least partly corresponds to

slighting), based on the documentary evidence. The comparative rarity of slighting made it more significant especially since confiscation was easily reversible if the subject found a way to win back favour. Castles could be repaired, but this required substantial investment. From 56 sites where the archaeology indicates whether the site was subsequently reused, 31 (55%) were abandoned as castles following slighting (Appendix 1). Some sites such as Groby were reused, but as manorial complexes rather than castles. Important fortifications – such as those in border areas – were typically confiscated rather than demolished because their continued military value outweighed the social value of their destruction.

### **9.8 Future research priorities**

As should be evident from Chapters 4, 5, and 6, excavation is the most important source of evidence for understanding castle slighting. However, this makes investigation inherently expensive. Landscape approaches to understand the impact of castle slighting are best undertaken in relation to sites where slighting has already been confidently identified. Three decades ago, John Kenyon (1990, 209) predicted that large-scale excavations as seen at Portchester and Launceston would become increasingly uncommon as costs escalated. This sentiment was echoed by Jonathan Coad (1994, 219) a few years later, remarking that ‘One inevitable outcome of modern archaeological techniques has been a spiralling in the cost of excavations to a point where only nationally-funded bodies can even contemplate them.’ Research by Aitchison and Rocks-Macqueen (2013) has demonstrated the vicissitudes of the archaeological profession and how closely it is linked to the economy and developer-funded work. While some of the excavations in this study were motivated by recording the archaeology ahead of development, research excavations most likely to provide evidence of slighting will become less common. However, the university-led or privately funded excavations have the potential to add further information to the discussion of castle slighting, such as those at Nevern by the University of Durham.

This thesis has exploited the wealth of archaeological evidence available to shed light on the previously poorly understudied phenomenon of slighting, a major though underappreciated lacuna in medieval archaeology. The limited

prior research into slighting meant considerable advancements could be made relatively quickly, but questions still remain. Of particular interest would be a study of how stone from a slighted castle was reused. Documentary evidence from the English Civil War in the 17<sup>th</sup> century shows that materials from a slighted castle were sometimes sold and reused (Rakoczy 2007). In a medieval context, the dispute between the townspeople of St Albans and the abbey in 1330 and again in 1381 was manifest in the material culture and using mundane objects as paving (Chapter 8). At Bedford, stone from the castle was used to rebuild a church and to repave the town (Chapter 7). At Duffield (Derbyshire) the church appears to reuse stone from the castle, but this has not been fully investigated (Jessop & Beauchamp 2015, 103). Whilst the social meaning of reuse is fully evident at St Albans, it falls outside the scope of castle studies. There is an opportunity to study the reuse of material in the context of castles. Differentiation would have to be made between castles that were slighted – such as Bedford – and those which fell out of use and had their structures effectively looted. Related to this topic, a study of what happened to the contents of slighted castles could be informative though challenging depending on how much information is available. As discussed in Chapter 8, portable items, such as documents or barrels of wine, featured in the discourse of power, though within the limits of this study it has not been possible to discuss how the contents of a slighted castle were treated.

One of the key priorities established by Rakoczy's (2007) study of slighting a decade ago was the establishment of a 'sighting database'. This study reiterates the importance of such a database in establishing a public understanding of slighting and the various roles it played throughout the medieval period. Making this information available would help reshape narratives around destruction and promote a more nuanced understanding of power in medieval society.

Beyond the geographical focus of this thesis, Ireland, France, and Germany would all benefit from a similar approach towards understanding castle slighting. According to Tom McNeill (2005, 1–3), 'Ireland is remarkable among the countries of western Europe for its scholarly neglect of its castles after the early years of [the 20<sup>th</sup>] century'. However, in the last couple of decades the study of castles in Ireland has entered a 'golden age' as dubbed by

Barry (2008, 130). This is reflected not just in a greater number of publications and research projects involving Irish castles, but an integration with the international study of castles and the way studies in the country have kept pace with developments in understanding the landscape and social significance of castles. A study of slighting in Ireland would further enhance understanding of its castles whilst actively guarding against the preconceptions ingrained in discussions of slighting in England, Wales, and Scotland. In contrast castle studies in Germany has progressed to the stage where the country is the home of the European Castles Institute, which aims to create a database of castle sites in Germany, Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands, Austria, Slovakia, Hungary, Latvia, and the Czech Republic (Deutsche Burgenvereinigung e.V. 2013). Though this data does not include whether a castle was slighted, this information can provide the basis for a study of castle slighting in Germany, and perhaps the other countries. With France the linked culture and history with England means a study of its slighted castles would make a good comparative study. The role of castles in the Hundred Years' War, the Cathar rebellion, and the Wars of Religion all provide contexts in which slighting may have taken place. For instance, Philippe Contamine (2007, 13) notes that during the Hundred Years' War it was common to demolish fortifications which could not be defended. This applies a primarily military understanding to the phenomenon, which is in part due to the nature of warfare between nations rather than civil war or rebellion, and may be a parallel to Robert Bruce's policy in the early 14<sup>th</sup> century. The events of 1047 demonstrate the potential of research into slighting in France. According to the chronicler William of Poitiers, writing in the 11<sup>th</sup> century, Duke William of Normandy followed up defeat of a rebel army at the battle of Val-ès-Dunes by ordering the destruction of fortifications built against him during the course of the conflict. In response the rebels 'hastened at his command to destroy utterly all the new fortifications which they had constructed in their eagerness for change' (*Gesta Guillelmi* trans. Davis & Chibnall 1998, 13).

Beyond the remit of this thesis, a better understanding of destruction would enhance discourse in other contexts – whether geographical or temporal. The long history of castle studies combined with the long-prevalent view of them as primarily military structures means that it provides fertile ground for



reinterpretation of destruction. Beyond the study of castles, destruction is often understood to have a range of meanings, but the approach of analysing the distribution of destruction contexts within a site would identify the reason behind the destruction. In prehistory, the role of hillforts in late prehistoric society would benefit from revision of slighted sites. For instance, the hillfort at Eddisbury in Cheshire may have been deliberately demolished by the Romans (Forde-Johnston 1962, 23–24) but these cases are infrequently interpreted. It could have been intended to move the centre of population, causing social upheaval and enabling conquest. The Romano-British period may be one of the best suited to the application of the methods used here; the conquest of Britain led to the foundation of many settlements, the introduction of a new form of military site, and rebellion and revolt against a new authority. Some forts such as Castleshaw (Greater Manchester) were deliberately demolished (Walker 1989, 27), and this is typically understood to be to prevent their use by a hostile force. The rebellion of the Iceni in the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD gives one likely situation for destruction events, while the decline of Roman rule gives the opportunity for discussions about abandonment and destruction. The archaeology of the English Reformation could be further enhanced by an analogous approach to that used in Chapters 4, 5, and 6 examining which areas of religious houses were demolished. A study of how building materials were reused from religious houses would be highly instructive. Slighting is one particular form of destruction and should feature in wider discussions about site taphonomy and abandonment. While 55% of the sites in this study ceased to be used as castles after they were slighted, a considerable proportion were either repaired or reused for a different purpose. This can inform debates about the continuity and use of high-status places; even a destructive event may not be enough to end activity at a site, and therefore archaeology should always be used to verify the historical record.

This thesis has been a contribution to the fields of castellology, destructionology, and medieval archaeology. It is not the final word on the complex social and military phenomenon that is castle slighting in the Middle Ages, but it is perhaps the first chapter. It can only be hoped that a wealth of information in the future enriches and enhances our current understanding.

## Appendix 1 – sites which have provided archaeological evidence for slighting

Name	County	Country	OS grid coordinates	Date slighted	Nature of evidence for date	Stone or timber	Area slighted	Evidence for destruction	Method of destruction	Who carried out the slighting?	Reused
Arkholme	Lancashire	England	SD58937184	undetermined	n/a	T	Motte ditch	Dump fill in motte ditch, burning on top of motte	Picking; burning	unknown	Uncertain
Ascot d'Oilly	Oxfordshire	England	SP30161904	Late 12th century	Pottery <i>terminus ante quem</i>	S	Great tower	Rubble mixed with domestic material; mound smoothed over keep	Picking	Henry II	Yes, but not as a castle
Bedford	Bedfordshire	England	TL05264968	1224	Documentary	S	Great tower; motte; intra-mural area; outer defences	Truncated motte; stone buildings robbed out; ditches partly filled with rubble; thick deposits of gravel and earth	Picking	Henry III	No
Botelers Castle	Warwickshire	England	SP08375588	12th or 13th century	Pottery dating activity on site; destruction by <i>terminus post quem</i> ; little silting indicates site likely to have been abandoned soon after construction	S	Outer defences	Ditch filled contained rubble and charcoal	Picking; burning	unknown	Yes
Bothwell	Lanarkshire	Scotland	NS68835934	1314 and 1337	Documentary	S	Great tower	Tower partly demolished and later repaired	Picking	Edward Bruce	Yes
Brandon	Warwickshire	England	SP408759	1266	Documentary	S	Great tower	Interior of the keep has been severely damaged by fire. Any reusable facing stone was robbed out.	Burning	Rebels loyal to Simon de Montfort	Yes, but probably not as a castle
Brockhurst	Shropshire	England	SO44659255	Mid-13th century	Pottery dating activity on site; destruction by <i>terminus post quem</i>	S	Outer defences	Ditch filled with debris and burnt timber	Burning	unknown	No

Buckton	Cheshire	England	SD98290161	Late 12th century	Pottery mixed with destruction context	S	Outer defences; gatehouse	Burning deposit in gatepassage; rubble in outer ditch	Burning; digging	unknown	No
Buittle	Dumfries and Galloway	Scotland	NX81926163	Early 14th century	Pottery mixed with destruction context	T	Outer defences	Rubble in ditch	Picking	Possibly Robert Bruce	Uncertain
Bungay	Suffolk	England	TM336897	1174	Documentary	S	Great tower	Mine gallery beneath the corner of the great tower	Undermining	Henry II	Yes
Caergwrle	Flintshire	Wales	SJ30705723	1283	Documentary	S	Intra-mural area	Layer of burning and rubble	Burning, picking	Edward I	Yes
Castell Bryn Amlwg	Shropshire	England	SO16748460	From the early 13th century onwards	Architectural design	S	Great tower	Material from great tower in the moat; burnt timbers within the tower	Picking; burning	unknown	No
Castell Carndochan	Merioneth	Wales	SH84703065	13th century	Assumption by excavators - no dating evidence	S	Great tower	Burnt wood, charcoal, and blackened soil discovered; burnt material inside the great tower	Burning	unknown	No
Castle Cary	Somerset	England	ST64113214	During or shortly after the Anarchy	Documentary	S	Outer defences	Layer of stone rubble in ditch, deposited soon after initial cut. Some mortared stones appeared to be 'fired'.	Picking; burning	Stephen	No
Castle Rushen	-	Isle of Man	SC26516745	14th century	Documentary	S	Great tower	Tower partly demolished and later repaired	Picking	unknown	Yes
Castlehill of Strachan	Aberdeenshire	Scotland	NO65749210	1308-1320	Pottery mixed with destruction context	T	Motte	Burnt timbers and filled in ditch	Burning; digging	Possibly Robert Bruce	No
Channellsbrook	Sussex	England	TQ18803335	undetermined	n/a	unknown	Motte	Part of the motte has been dug out and deposited in the ditch	Digging	unknown	Uncertain
Coull	Aberdeenshire	Scotland	NJ51270224	14th century	Inference from other sites - probably slighted during the Scottish Wars of Independence	S	Great tower; outer defences; gatehouse	Charred wood discovered in front of the gatehouse; clean breaches in curtain wall; charcoal	Picking; burning	Robert Bruce or David II	No

								discovered within the towers			
Crowmarsh Gifford	Oxfordshire	England	SU61318940	After 1140s	Pottery mixed with destruction context	T	Outer defences	Deposits of chalk and charcoal in the ditch	Picking; burning	Possibly Henry II	No
Danes Castle	Devon	England	SX91989330	During or shortly after the Anarchy	Pottery gives <i>terminus post quem</i> for construction; absence of silting indicates site likely to have been abandoned soon	T	Outer defences	Site never finished, ditched partially filled with clean deposits	Digging	unknown	No
Degannwy	Caernarfonshire	Wales	SH78227945	1263	Documentary	S	Great tower; intra-mural area; outer defences; gatehouse	Rubble layer containing highly decorated stone stylistically from c1200-1235	Picking; undermining	Llyewllyn ap Gruffyd	Yes, briefly refortified by Edward I in 1277 before being abandoned
Desborough	Buckinghamshire	England	SU84719332	During or shortly after the Anarchy	Assumption that the castle is a siege castle based on date of construction	T	Outer defences	Ditch entirely filled with a single dark organic deposit contrasting with otherwise chalky/loamy soil	Digging	Possibly Henry II	No
Dryslwyn	Carmarthenshire	Wales	SN55402035	1407	Documentary; relative dating to earlier events	S	Great tower; intra-mural area; gatehouse	Layer of burning; entrance to building sealed; hinges torn from doorways	Burning; undermining	Probably Henry IV	No
Dudley	Staffordshire	England	SO947907	1175	Documentary	S	Great tower; intra-mural area	Later great tower built over the remains of an earlier tower; occupation levels elsewhere burnt	Picking; burning	Henry II	Yes
Duffield	Derbyshire	England	SK34344406	After 1250	Pottery dating activity on site; destruction by <i>terminus post quem</i> . Historical event for added context.	S	Great tower; motte	Burnt layers discovered surrounding the keep and at the top of the rampart	Burning	Probably Henry III	No
Dyserth	Flintshire	Wales	SJ05987990	1263	Documentary	S	Intra-mural area; outer	Collapsed towers coinciding with historical sources.	Picking, burning, undermining	Llywelyn ap Gruffydd	No

							defences; entrance	Lots of burnt timer. Possible mining.			
Esslemont	Aberdeenshire	Scotland	NJ93212975	14th or 15th century	Pottery mixed with destruction context	S	Great tower (tower house)	Burning discovered around and inside tower house	Burning	Hey family	Yes
Eynsford	Kent	England	TQ54176582	1312	Documentary	S	Intra-mural area	Lots of tile debris, door hinges torn off	Picking	Claimants to the barony of Eynsford	Yes
Farnham	Surrey	England	SU83724732	Mid-12th century	Documentary and architectural	S	Great tower	Stone from the square keep reused to build the shell keep	Picking	Probably Henry II	Yes
Framlingham	Suffolk	England	TM287637	1174-5	Documentary	uncertain	Motte	Very thick layer of makeup containing extensive amounts of mortar within the castle courtyard, suggested to have been the result of the levelling of a motte.	Picking; digging	Henry II	Yes
Great Easton	Essex	England	TL60902543	Mid-12th century	Pottery mixed with destruction context	T	Motte ditch	Layer of clay indicates the ramparts were levelled	Digging	unknown	Probably not
Great Torrington	Devon	England	SS49651896	1228	Documentary	S?	Intra-mural area; outer defences	Rubble spreads and unusual motte shape	Digging; picking	Henry III	No
Groby	Leicestershire	England	SK52390764	1170s	Documentary	S	Motte	Motte has an unusual kidney shape	Digging	Henry II	Yes, but probably not as a castle
Harbottle	Northumberland	England	NT93250481	Early 14th century	Documentary	S	Outer defences	GPR discovered masonry in the ditch	Picking	Robert Bruce or Edward II	Yes
Hen Blas	Flintshire	Wales	SJ22167345	13th century first quarter	Coins mixed with destruction context	T	Motte ditch	Layer of charcoal 1 to 4 inches thick in motte ditch; previously level motte top now sloping	Burning	unknown	Yes
Ingleston Motte	Dumfries and Galloway	Scotland	NX77485798	1185	Political context	T?	Motte; intra- mural area	Tower on top of motte burned; layer of burnt material found elsewhere	Burning	Roland of Galloway	Uncertain

Leicester	Leicestershire	England	SK58260413	1170s	Documentary; pottery mixed with destruction context indicates 11th or 12th century	S	Motte ditch; outer defences	Rubble ditch fill over a layer of silting; layer of rubble discovered elsewhere	Picking	Henry II	Yes
Lochmaben	Dumfries and Galloway	Scotland	NY08838115	14th century	Pottery used to provide <i>terminus post quem</i>	T	Outer defences	Burning near palisade, ditch appears to have a single dump fill	Burning; digging	Possibly Archibald Douglas	Yes
Ludgershall	Wiltshire	England	SU26385118	Second half of the 12th century	Pottery mixed with destruction context	S	Great tower; intra-mural area	Great tower in use for short time before being dismantled and built over; other structures cleared at the same time	Picking	Henry II	Yes
Middleton Stoney	Oxfordshire	England	SP53212325	13th century	Pottery dating activity on site	S	Outer defences	Layers of rubble and turf, indicating several phases of destruction/abandonment	Picking	John	Yes
Mountsorrel	Leicestershire	England	SK58201495	1217	Documentary	S	Intra-mural area	Building material in the ditch	Picking	Henry III	No
Nantcribba	Montgomeryshire	Wales	SJ23740140	1263	Documentary	S	Intra-mural area	Charcoal, melted lead, and vitrified material	Burning	Gruffydd ap Gwenwynwyn	No
Nevern	Pembrokeshire	Wales	SN08214015	1195	Documentary	S	Great tower; intra-mural area; outer defences; gatehouse	Foundations of great tower cracked; rubble around tower; charcoal and burnt material elsewhere	Undermining; burning	Hywel Sais	Yes, but agriculturally
Newnham	Kent	England	TQ95455786	12th century	Pottery mixed with destruction context	S	Great tower	Mixed demolition layer of flint, mortar, and plaster deposited within 50 years of construction	Picking	unknown	No
Penmaen	Glamorgan	England	SS53418803	13th century	Pottery dating activity on site; destruction by <i>terminus post quem</i>	T	Gatehouse	Vitrified limestone	Burning	unknown	Yes
Pennard	Glamorgan	Wales	SS54428850	12th or 13th century	Architectural design of building providing <i>terminus ante quem</i>	T	Intra-mural area	Charcoal and burnt wattle and daub	Burning	unknown	Yes
Pleshey	Essex	England	TL66531437	Before 1200	Later context providing <i>terminus ante quem</i>	uncertain	Motte	Moat partially backfilled	Digging	Henry II	Yes

Pontesbury	Shropshire	England	SJ40120599	12th or 13th century	Pottery dating activity on site; destruction by <i>terminus post quem</i> . Ditch filling in the 19th century is unrelated.	S	Great tower	Layer of charcoal within the tower	Burning	unknown	No
Radcot	Oxfordshire	England	SU28489964	11th or 12th century	Pottery mixed with destruction context	S	Great tower; intra-mural area; outer defences; gatehouse	Walls robbed and mortar scraped off reused ashlar; rubble fill in ditch	Picking	Possibly Stephen or Henry II	Yes
Roxburgh	Roxburghshire	Scotland	NT71313773	1460	Documentary	S	Outer defences	Structure utterly destroyed	Picking	The army of James II	No
Rudgwick	Surrey	England	TQ07743446	12th century onwards	Pottery dating activity on site; destruction by <i>terminus post quem</i>	T	Motte	4 inches of charcoal mixed with red floor tiles and green glazed pottery	Burning	unknown	No
Saffron Walden	Essex	England	TL53923871	1157-67	Documentary	S	Outer defences	Masonry in the ditch; material from rampart deposited on top of the masonry	Picking; digging	Henry II	Yes
Sheffield	Yorkshire	England	SK35798768	1266	Documentary	S	Intra-mural area	Layer of burning	Burning	John de Eyvill	Yes
South Mimms	Middlesex	England	TL22970260	1170-80	Pottery mixed with destruction context	T	Motte ditch	Deposit of chalk rubble about 1.5m thick; charcoal spread within the tower, along with melted sheet lead might indicate destruction by fire	Digging; burning	unknown	No
Sycharth	Denbighshire	Wales	SJ20522586	1403	Documentary; coin discovered corroborating	T	Motte	Burnt timbers discovered from a hall on top of the motte	Burning	Prince Henry (later Henry V)	No
Therfield	Hertfordshire	England	TL331371	Mid-12th century	Pottery dating activity on site; destruction by <i>terminus post quem</i> ; little silting indicates site likely to have been abandoned soon after construction	T	Outer defences	Timbers deliberately removed and rampart thrown into the ditch	Digging	unknown	No

Trowbridge	Wiltshire	England	ST85575786	Late 12th or early 13th century	Assumption by excavators - no dating evidence	uncertain	Outer defences	Layer of clay indicates the ramparts were levelled	Digging	unknown	No
Wareham	Dorset	England	SY92178718	During or shortly after the Anarchy	Documentary	S	Great tower	Burnt timbers found in keep, and rubble on the outside of the keep	Burning, picking	Possibly Stephen	Yes
Weoley	Warwickshire	England	SP02158275	1320-80	Pottery mixed with destruction context	S	Intra-mural area; gatehouse	Rubble spread behind curtain walls; rubble in moat	Picking	unknown	Yes
Weston Turville	Buckinghamshire	England	SP859104	Late 11th or early 12th century	Pottery mixed with destruction context	T	Motte ditch	Dump fill in motte ditch	Digging	Possibly William Rufus	Yes, but possibly not as a castle

## Appendix 2 – sites which have not produced convincing archaeological evidence of slighting

Name	County	Country	OS grid coordinates	Area of evidence	Evidence for destruction	Reason excluded
Bampton	Devon	England	SS95902253	Motte ditch	Ditch deliberately filled and the ground levelled	HER says no medieval finds found in fill making dating speculative
Biggleswade	Bedfordshire	England	TL18434452	Outer defences	Burned structure on a berm between two earthworks	Purpose of the building is unclear - could have been a workers' hut accidentally burnt down
Bledisloe Tump	Gloucestershire	England	SO68340818	Intra-mural area	Posts removed from holes	12th-century context prompted excavator to suggest slighting after the Anarchy, but reuse of timbers could have been peaceful; evidence not strong enough for slighting.
Bramber	Sussex	England	TQ18551070	Motte ditch	Limited silting in ditch, rapid and deep deposit of clayey chalk indicates the ditch was filled soon after the motte was constructed	Ditch fill was 'soft and crumbly' indicating it was a very unstable material, and excavators feel that weathering may have been a cause. Alternatively, if evident during construction that the motte was unstable it may have been abandoned and partly levelled. No other evidence of destruction on the site.
Brimpsfield	Gloucestershire	England	SO940127	Whole site	Little left of the site after orders by Edward II	Archaeological investigation has been restricted to recording the fragmentary standing remains
Bristol	Gloucestershire	England	ST59227315	Gatehouse and curtain wall	Overlain by 14th-century destruction layers	Late date might indicate destruction was part of urban expansion
Burton-in-Lonsdale	Yorkshire	England	SD65007213	Motte	Layer of ash upon the pavement, and the stones making up the pavement showed signs of fire	Finds on the pavement included much medieval material, but also coins from the 17th century indicating later activity had intruded on this context



Caereinion	Montgomeryshire	Wales	SJ16350549	Motte and ditch	Irregular surface of motte, and possible filled in ditch (traces of depression south of motte)	Site has not been excavated to establish whether motte ditch was filled gradually or was part of a single dump
Castell Dinas Bran	Denbighshire	Wales	SJ22244306	Great tower; intra-mural area	Burning observed near the great tower when access facilities were added to the site; may correlate with documented burning of the castle in 1277.	Not excavated. Regular tourist activity on the site means any burning observed may be left by campers. Burning would need to be checked stratigraphically to achieve a relative date.
Castle Donnington	Leicestershire	England	SK448276	Outer defences	Tumbled masonry	Cause and date unknown
Clifford	Herefordshire	England	SO243456	Gatehouse; outer defences	Rubble around base of the gatehouse - ashlar seems to have been robbed out as it was not part of the rubble	No finds to date destruction phase; limited information on which to decide whether it was slighting or robbing after abandonment. 2008 rescue archaeology found pottery dated 14th-17th century mixed with burnt clay context, and 12th-15th century pottery in rubble context above. Destruction date uncertain, but possibly medieval.
Dolforwyn	Montgomeryshire	Wales	SO15189501	Great tower; intra-mural area	Layers of rubble in keep (square tower)	Deep and complicated layering indicative of decay over a protracted period
Harescombe	Gloucestershire	England	SO83651040	Whole site	Rubble spreads mixed with linear features	Resistivity survey indicates rubble spreads, but cannot offer a reason
Hen Domen	Montgomeryshire	Wales	SO21379802	Motte and tower	"uniformly burned layer of clay" perhaps indicating destruction	May have been a way of 'closing' the site rather than slighting
Loughor	Glamorgan	Wales	SS56429798	Intra-mural area	Layer of ash and charcoal. One internal building destroyed	Event no earlier than 13th century; burning could have resulted from an attack
Luton	Bedfordshire	England	TL09062082	Outer defences	Large fill in ditch compared to earlier fills. Lack of finds indicates rapid deposition.	Ditch fill could have been due to weathering - excavations at another section of ditch revealed evidence for silting and erosion rather than a large dump fill. Ambiguous case.
Rumney	Monmouthshire	Wales	ST21037893	Motte; intra-mural area; gatehouse	Debris spread over site marking the demolition of the ramparts; layer of burning	Likely to have been part of remodelling
Thetford	Norfolk	England	TL87468281	n/a	Documentary, though Pipe Roll could refer to nearby Red Castle (also no evidence of slighting)	Excavations at the outer rampart and on top of the motte found no evidence of slighting (ditch filled by weathering)
Tote Copse	Sussex	England	SU92270477	Motte itself	Intrusion into the motte may indicate attempted demolition	Likely to have been caused by robbing of the stone from the great tower on the motte
Wolfscastle	Pembrokeshire	Wales	SM95772650	Intra-mural area	Burnt stone found in the bailey during ploughing	Cause and date unknown

## Appendix 3 – number of castles in England and Wales with contemporary documentation

Based on Cathcart King's *Castellarium Anglicanum* (1983) in which the author notes whether castles were mentioned in contemporary documents.

### England

County	Number of castles (excluding artillery sites)	Number of sites with contemporary documentation
Bedfordshire	25	7
Berkshire	17	12
Buckingham	25	7
Cambridge and the Isle of Ely	15	14
Cheshire	23	15
Cornwall	17	10
Cumberland	81	33
Derbyshire	16	8
Devon	33	12
Dorset	17	13
Durham	31	16
Essex	26	9
Gloucestershire	33	17
Hampshire and Isle of Wight	22	10
Herefordshire	93	30
Hertfordshire	16	6
Huntingdon	7	4
Kent	43	21
Lancashire	35	16
Leicestershire	24	11
Lincolnshire	37	22
London and Middlesex	6	4
Norfolk	23	14
Northamptonshire and Peterborough	35	19
Northumberland	231	192
Nottinghamshire	12	7
Oxfordshire	21	15
Rutland	6	1
Shropshire	112	41
Somerset	25	13
Staffordshire	16	15
Suffolk	28	17
Surrey	12	6
Sussex	26	17
Warwickshire	31	18
Westmorland	34	7
Wiltshire	28	17
Worcester	15	10
Yorkshire	123	64
Channel Islands	10	8

Isle of Man	7	2
Scilly Isles and Lundy	3	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>1440</b>	<b>782</b>

## Wales

<b>County</b>	<b>Number of castles (excluding tower)</b>	<b>Number of sites with contemporary documentation</b>
Brecknock	41	17
Caernarfon	16	7
Cardigan	31	17
Carmarthen	43	14
Denbigh	15	10
Flint	19	14
Glamorgan	78	31
Merioneth	19	11
Monmouthshire	57	20
Montgomery	40	15
Pembroke	51	13
Radnor	43	20
<b>Total</b>	<b>453</b>	<b>189</b>

## Appendix 4 – list of castles mentioned in *Medieval Archaeology*

England	Scotland	Wales
Aldford	Abercorn	Aberedw
Aldingbourne	Aberdeen	Abergavenny
Aldingham	Aberdour	Aberystwyth
Almondbury	Achandun	Barry
Alton	Alloa Tower	Boughrood
Anstey	Auldhill	Brecon
Arundel	Balvaird	Caergwrle
Ascot Doilly	Balvenie	Caernarfon
Ascott under Wychwood	Banff	Caerphilly
Baginton	Barholm	Caldicot
Bakewell	Blackness	Cardiff
Bamburgh	Boghall	Carew
Bampton	Bothwell	Carmarthen
Banbury	Breacha	Castell Arnallt
Barby	Breachacha	Castell Blaenllynfi
Barford	Buittle	Castell Gwithian
Barnard Castle	Burleigh	Castell Madoc
Barnstaple	Cadzow	Castell Morgraig
Barnwell	Caerlaverock	Castell-y-Bere
Barrow-upon-Humber	Caerlaverock Old Castle	Chepstow
Basingstoke	Carrick	Cilgerran
Baynard Castle, Cottingham	Castle Sinclair Girnigoe	Coed-y-Cwm
Baynard's Castle	Castlehill of Strachan	Conway
Beckington	Cathcart	Cosmeston
Bedford	Cessford	Deganwy
Beeston	Colinton	Denbigh
Bentley	Covington Tower	Dinas Powys
Berwick-upon-Tweed	Craigievar	Dingestow
Bodiam	Craignethan	Dixton Mound
Bolingbroke	Cranmore's Tower	Dolforwyn
Bolsover	Crichton	Dolwyddelan
Bolton	Crookston	Dryslwyn
Bossiney	Cruggleton	Flint
Boteler's	Cullen Castle	Glasbury
Bourne	Cupar	Grosmont
Bowes	Dairsie	Harlech
Brackley	Doone	Hen Domen
Bradwell	Drum	Hen Gastell
Bramber	Druminnor	Ifton Manor
Bristol	Duffus	Kidwelly
Bronsil	Dumbarton	Langstone Court

Brough	Dunbar	Laugharne
Brougham	Dundonald	Llancarfan
Broughton	Dunnottar	Llandeilo Dinefwr
Bungay	Dunollie Castle	Llangybi
Burgh Castle	Dunre	Llanspyddid
Camber	Dunstaffnage	Llanstephan
Cambridge	Dunure	Llansyddid
Canterbury	Edinburgh	Loughor
Carisbroke	Eilean Dearg	Mathrafal
Carlisle	Elgin	Monmouth
Castle Bromwich	Fast	Montgomery
Castle Camps	Finlaggan	Morlais
Castle Cary	Fort William	Nantcribba
Castle Eaton	Freswick	Neath
Castle Neroche	Froach Eilean	Newport
Castle Rising	Fyvie	Old Aberystwyth
Castle Toll	Gallows Hill	Oystermouth
Castleton, Yorkshire	Glasgow	Pembroke
Catterick	Green Castle	Pen y Clawdd
Cawood	Hallbar Tower	Pen y Mwd
Chalgrave	Hallyards	Penard
Chanstone Tump motte	Hillhead	Pencoed
Chartley	Horse Cross	Penhow
Chester	Howden Motte	Penmaen
Chichester	Huntley	Pen-y-Pill
Chipchase Pele	Inchconnel	Powis
Chipping Ongar	Ingleston	Roche
Claxton	Inverkeilor Red Castle	Rumney
Clun	Inverlochy	Scully
Colchester	Kilconquhar	Skenfrith
Conisborough	Kildrummy	Swansea
Coventry	Kilspindie	Sycharth
Dacre	Kings Inch	Symon's Castle
Dane John	Laurencekirk	Tan-y-Bwlch
Danes Castle	Lauriston	Tomen y Bala
Dartmouth	Leven	Trelech
Denton	Linlithgow Palace	Tump Terret
Devizes	Loch Leven	Twyn-y-Garth
Doncaster	Lochmaben	Usk
Dorestone	Lochnaw	
Dothill	Lordscairnie	
Dover	Lorn	
Downton	Lossiemouth	
Driffield	Loudoun, Old Castle	
Dudley	Mains Castle	
Duffield	McCulloch's Castle	

Durham	McEwan's Castle	
Edlingham	Mearns, Barrance	
Elsdon	Mearns, Housecraig	
Etal	Melgand	
Exeter	Melgund	
Eye	Migvie	
Eynesford	Mugdock	
Eynsford	Neidpath	
Farleton	Neilston	
Farnham	Newark	
Farningham	Newton Mearns	
Fineshade	Niddry	
Flamborough	North Port	
Fleet	Old Rattray	
Folkstone	Paisley	
Framlingham	Portencross	
Gidleigh	Ravenscraig	
Gloucester	Renfrew	
Gomerock	Roberton	
Goodrich	Rossdhu	
Grafton	Rothesay	
Great Easton	Rough Hill Motte	
Great Wakering	Rowallan	
Grimsthorpe	Rusko	
Groby	Sauchie Tower	
Guildford	Seagate	
Hadleigh	Sinclair Girnigoe	
Halton (Cheshire)	Skirling	
Halton (Northumberland)	Slamannan Motte	
Harbottle	Sorbie	
Harewood	Sorbie Old Tower	
Hartfield	South Kinrara	
Hartshill	Spynie	
Hastings	St Andrew's Castle	
Haughley	Stirling	
Helmsley	Stranraer	
Hemyock	Straraer	
Hereford	Strome	
Hertford	Sween	
Heywood	Tantallon	
Higham Ferrers	Taymouth	
Hillesley	The Peel of Lumphanan	
Hopton	The Wirk	
Hough-on-the-Hill	Threave	
Howton	Thurso	
Hull	Tolquhon	

Huntingdon	Torwood	
Hylton	Urquhart	
Hylton Castle	Wardhouse	
Kendal	Wauchope Castle	
Kenilworth		
Kilton		
Knaresborough		
Launceston		
Lavendon		
Leicester		
Lewes		
Lincoln		
Lindfield		
Little Kimble		
Lodsworth		
Long Sutton		
Longtown		
Ludgershall		
Ludlow		
Lundy Island		
Luton		
Lydford		
Marlborough		
Maxey		
Maxstoke		
Melbourne		
Middleton Stoney		
Mileham		
Montacute		
Montfichet		
Montfichet's Tower		
Morpeth		
Nafferton		
Newark		
Newbury		
Newcastle upon Tyne		
Newton Park		
Newton St Loe		
Newton Tump		
Newton-le-Willows		
Norfolk		
Northampton		
Norwich		
Nottingham		
Oakham		
Oakhampton		

Old Baile		
Old Sarum		
Old Wardour Castle		
Orford		
Oswestry		
Oxford		
Pendragon		
Peterborough		
Pevensey		
Pickering		
Piel		
Pleshey		
Plymouth		
Pont Hendre Bailey		
Pontefract		
Pontesbury		
Portchester		
Poundstock		
Quatford		
Ratley and Upton		
Rayleigh		
Reigate		
Restormel		
Richards Castle		
Rochester		
Rochford Tower		
Rose		
Rougemont		
Ruislip		
Ryton		
Saffron Walden		
Salwick Hall		
Samlesbury		
Sandal Magna		
Sandwich		
Sapcote		
Scarborough		
Scotney Old Castle		
Sheffield		
Sherborne Old Castle		
Sissinghurst		
Skipsea		
Sleaford		
Smethcott		
Solihull		
South Mimms		



Southampton		
Spalding		
St Briavels		
St Michael's Mount		
Stafford		
Stamford		
Starkey		
Sulgrave		
Swavesey		
Tamworth		
Tattershall		
Taunton		
Tewkesbury		
Therfield		
Thetford		
Thirlwall		
Thirsk		
Thurleigh		
Tickhill		
Tintagel		
Tiverton		
Tonge		
Toot Hill		
Towcester		
Tower of London		
Trowbridge		
Tutbury		
Wallingford		
Wallingstones		
Walpole St Peter		
Warkworth		
Warwick		
Weedon Lois		
Weeting		
Welbourn		
Weobley		
Weoley		
West Derby		
West Stoke		
Whitchurch		
Whittington		
Wilton		
Winchelsea		
Winchester		
Windsor		
Winsbury		

Wollaston		
Woolstaston		
York, Baille Hill		

## Glossary

**castle** – a fortified medieval residence

**great tower** – a high-status tower found within castles, often the visual centrepiece (also referred to as a keep or donjon)

**intra-mural area** – area enclosed by the castle's defences

**motte-and-bailey(s)** – a castle consisting of a mound typically surmounted by a tower, connected to one or more defended enclosures

**ringwork** – a castle with defended by a bank and ditch

**shell-keep** – structure similar to a great tower, in which buildings are arranged against a curtain wall around a courtyard

**slighting** – the damage of a high-status structure, its associated landscape and contents, to degrade its value

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