

The History Of Castle Green The Making Of The Landscape

Hereford's first town defences were erected around 850 and were then extended in 900 to cover the area known as Castle Green.

The Castle Green has been described as "the hidden jewel of Hereford." Concealed behind the streetscape, it can be found just beyond the cathedral. For both resident and visitor the Castle Green is a very special place, an oasis of peace and calm, and a refuge from the general hub bub of city life.

When John Leland, King Henry VIII's antiquary visited Hereford in the early 16th century he kept a diary of places that he visited. He was interested in castles, monasteries, churches, and geographical features. His diary noted that the castle "hath bene one of the fairest, largest and strongest castle of England. I take the castle to be of as great circuit as Windesore."

Today Castle Green is a large landscape area on a cliff above the river Wye where people play bowls and enjoy the wide open space. Although there are no upstanding walls and no large castle mound left to give a true picture of what was once one of the most important castles in the country, the surrounding earthworks and part of the moat that survive give a slight impression of the defended area.

Also, after a dry summer, the buried foundation walls of the castle show as brown parched marks in the otherwise green grass. In the nineteenth century when a sewer was laid across the Green the massive stone-walled passages of the castle were briefly exposed. It was recorded by Walter Pilley, noted antiquarian, that he saw, "two or three skeletons, also a pitcher jug in perfect condition. Unfortunately while the workmen were lifting it up, a mass of earth fell, breaking it all to pieces. Close to this was a deep well, with walls lined with stone".

Herefordshire would have been a very different place just after last Ice Age around 15,000 B.C. At this time the whole



county was covered by a lake with islands, some ancient hills and moraine heaps.

The river Wye would be winding its way through the county, the main route appears to have been below Aylestone Hill coming from Stretton Sugwas, across Widemarsh, cutting into Eign Hill and lapping up against the slopes of Dinedor Hill.

A little later a sudden surge of water was produced as the Little Welsh Glacier continued to disintegrate. As a result a new course for the Wye was cut through the high ground at Belmont and Breinton. The existing gravel banks were pushed aside around the site of the future city of Hereford smashing into a prominent ridge of gravel, creating the site on which Hereford Castle and Cathedral were eventually built.

If the concrete defences had not been laid on the bank of the Wye in the 1970s, the river would still be moving clay and sand today. Castle Green, and the city appeared from this turmoil and disturbance as a dry ridge surrounded to the north and east by a wet region. This was aptly called “the wide march”.

As the temperature began to rise, so the river Wye lost most of its energy and the gravel island gradually dried out. Soon grasses, followed by birch and willow, began to colonise on the raised ground. Much later, by around 8,000 B.C. hazels, limes and oaks began to take root. The boar, goats and red deer whose bones have been found in the area would have kept the vegetation low and, as a result, Castle Green would have had the appearance of open parkland.

With the arrival of Neolithic people in 4,000 B.C. bringing with them their grazing animals and demand for timber, the trees on the gravels would have been reduced further.

Although no flint scrapers have been recovered, which would have suggested the presence of early man, Neolithic and Bronze Age flints and a few axes have been found all around the city.

Evidence shows that there may have been

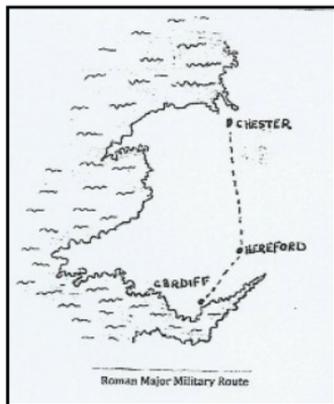


prehistoric occupation close to the site of the river crossing, which suggests that the ford was in use.

During the subsequent Iron Age the Hereford basin was ringed with hill-forts, making it a convenient crossing place on the river. It is likely the second ford beneath Castle Green came into existence at an early date as a by-ford.

Many animal bones from this era have been found around Hereford, so it can be assumed that that cattle would have been grazing on the plateau at this time. Over 40 % of the bones found from the late Iron Age at the hill-fort of Sutton Walls, north-east of the city, came from cattle. An approximate amount of similar cattle bones have been found from several sites in Hereford itself during the Saxon and medieval periods.

It is thought that the Romans utilised the ford beneath the Bishop's Palace for a major military route running from Chester to Caerleon. Fragments of material



from a Roman floor have been found outside the library in Broad Street, which would have been close to this route.

Two Roman altars, found with other Roman material in Victoria Street, together with another altar found in the 19th century in St. John's Street suggest that there may have been a small scale transitory Roman presence at the heart of Hereford. No Roman material has actually come from the Castle Green as it remained a place set aside from the community.

It appears that from 5th to the 8th centuries Hereford was part of a sub-Roman world (British or Celtic) who were ruled by minor Christian princes. At this time the area stretched westwards into Wales and south across the river Severn into Somerset and Devon. Although the diocese, and possibly the cathedral, was founded in AD 676 "the city was pre-eminently a Royal foundation, with a strategic importance based on its command of a major route into central Wales

and its position astride a recognised ford across the River Wye”.

The first town defences were erected around 850 and were then extended in 900 to cover the area known as Castle Green.

The city of Hereford has a very long and distinguished history being the earliest Saxon town built west of the river Severn and is also one of the earliest examples of the post-Roman town to be laid out with a formal plan.

While “improvements” were being made to the area in 1973 excavations were carried out on the southern corner of the Green. During this work buildings were found connected with the minster church of St. Guthlac. Also an extensive burial ground thought to extend back to the 7th century was found surrounding it. The excavation of St. Guthlac’s put Castle Green on the archaeological map of England. During the last 30 years there have been much academic discussion, as well as speculation, about the place of the green in the early history of Hereford and especially in relationship to the Cathedral.

“ It is very unlikely that we shall ever know precisely why and when a permanent settlement was first built on the gravel terrace adjoining the Wye ford at Hereford. The problems are two fold - there is very little documentary evidence, and what there is tends to be rather obscure, and the archaeological remains are inevitably slight and often difficult to interpret and date with any degree of reliability due to later disturbances.”

The History Of Castle Green

The Development Of The Castle Site

(Part II)

By about AD 900 Hereford 's town defences had been extended to include Castle Green.



The new work was well designed and constructed, which would have looked impressive from the outside. A series of closely - spaced vertical posts were set into the ground a short distance behind the inside lip of a broad ditch. Split logs were placed horizontally on top of each other behind them, against which layers of turves were laid to form a rampart. The face, which would have included an upstanding breastwork, would have been about 4m high.

These timber defences would have had a limited life span, so it would not be long before the whole circuit would need to be improved or replaced. It would have needed the addition of a stone wall built in front of the original timber defences, which would probably have been about 2.5m high and 2m wide.

The top of this rampart would have been used as a fighting platform, and to gain easy access a road would have been constructed on the inside of the embankment.

This early defensive work lies well-buried underneath the eastern earthwork which now encloses the remains of Herford Castle.

A re-built section can be seen to the north of Castle Green at the rear of St. Owen's Court.

This became the first defence to be built around the area which, much later, was to become Hereford Castle. Although Castle Green was within the defensive enclosure it was never a residential part of the city.

Many years before the Norman Conquest in 1066 the area was used by a religious community, which may have been established before there was a cathedral in Hereford.

Initially, this may have been associated with a spring in the area which was later understood to have had miraculous powers, and was known as St. Ethelbert's Well.

This religious community was eventually dedicated to St. Guthlac, who had previously fought on the Welsh border, before retiring to become a hermit in the Fens. When he died in AD 715 he was buried in Crowland in Lincolnshire. During the reign of Edward 1 a fire in the royal castle destroyed the wooden shrine, that covered the saint's remains. Later some of the remains were moved to Hereford.

Before the beginning of the eighth century a large burial ground surrounded the monastery of St. Guthlac. This cemetery was used both for the monks and the local community, and continued to be used for the next 500 years. It has been suggested that it is possible that up to 15,000 bodies may have been buried under the Green. This may seem a large number, but if Hereford had a population of less than a 1,000 it would only mean 30 burials a year.

In 1960 and 1973 archaeological excavations revealed over 85 burials, and after radio-carbon dating it was established that most of these were dated earlier than the foundation of the castle.

At the same time as these excavations were taking place the stone foundations of two buildings were uncovered. One of these was of a small stone church that was probably built in the second half of the eleventh century, and eventually became the castle chapel, surviving well into the seventeenth century. It is thought that this small stone church replaced one of timber on a slight artificial mound that would have been built as early as 7th century. The other stone foundation that was re-built at least once may have been a mortuary chapel and would probably have been demolished before AD 1100. Both these remains, together with an unexcavated building that stood between them can be seen as parched marks in the grass, and are



Hogg's Mount. This may have been the Motte that William fitz Osbern built.

understood to be part of the monastic settlement of St. Guthlac.

In 1046 Ralph, the son of the Count Vexin was made Earl of Hereford. During the following six years he constructed a castle at Hereford and installed a Norman garrison. This would have been one the earliest Norman castles in England, and would have been situated within the defended Saxon town, which at that time was bounded on the north by Eign Gate Street, High Town and St Owen's Street.

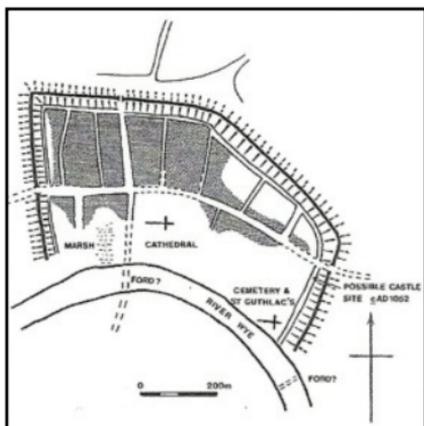
The castle would have consisted of little more than a simple motte headed with a tower. It has been suggested that Hogg's Mount, at the north-eastern corner of Castle Green is the remains of this castle.

This castle had a very short life, as three years later it was destroyed by the Welsh when the town and cathedral were burnt, and Gruffydd ap Llewellyn grabbed "vast spoil and booty."

Harold Godwinson, after pursuing the Welsh returned to Hereford, "which he forthwith fortified with gates and bars and with a broad deep ditch." It seems probable that the castle site was then left abandoned for eleven years until the Norman Conquest. In 1066 William fitz Osbern, Lord of Breteuil in Normandy, was given the earldom of Hereford,

with the specific task of building castles on the Welsh border. As Hereford was the center of his palatinate it seems almost certain he would have rebuilt the castle as there was a castle at Hereford in existence in 1067 when it was attacked by the Saxon, Eric the Wild.

It is likely that William constructed the large motte which stood to the west of Castle Green in the area that is now Redcliffe Gardens, and built a tower upon it. The



The defended area of Hereford in the early 10th century. Much of the street pattern still exists

motte was joined with an embankment to Hogg's Mount, which combined with the existing Saxon town defences on the east would have separated St. Guthlac's monastery and the cemetery within the new castle bailey without infringement of land ownership.

In the short space of five years William fitz Osbern had made the border area safe. He also re-designed Hereford by reconstructing the castle and by building a new market place outside the Saxon defences. This area is now known as High Town. It was shortly after this that William fitz Osbern was killed in 1071 in Flanders. His son and heir, Roger unsuccessfully attempted to depose the king that resulted in his estates, including the castle of Hereford becoming crown property.

Harvey Sayce

The History of Castle Green Pt 3

William Rufus was succeeded to the throne by his brother, Henry 1 in 1100. Henry skillfully reigned for the following 35 years, nominating before his death, his daughter, Matilda, as his successor. However, this did not materialize as the Council of Barons did not consider a woman worthy to rule and offered the throne to Steven de Blois, nephew of Henry 1 and grandson of the Conqueror.

During 1138, Geoffery Talbot garrisoned the castle on behalf of Matilda. Immediately Steven de Blois marched to besiege and take the castle, and while this was happening the insurgents set fire to the city so that all below the bridge over the Wye was burned down. According to records Geoffery Talbot returned to Hereford and burned down all the other side of the Wye. A year later, Matilda landed in England by which time the greater part of western England had broken allegiance with Steven de Blois.

Miles of Gloucester joined Matilda's party and after "routing Steven's men at Wallingford in Oxfordshire seized the city of Herefordshire". However, the castle resisted besiegement until Miles and Geoffery Talbot joined forces to attack.

One of Steven's supporters, Robert de Bec gave an eyewitness account of the event. He described how the church tower was used to erect engines so that missile weapons could be thrown against the king's men and protective ditches dug across the Castle Green disturbing all the graves in the burial place surrounding St. Guthlac's monastery. This must have been a distressing time for the residence of Hereford , witnessing their relatives and friend's bodies being thrown up against the castle ramparts and the church tower, where once the bells would summon the people to a service to now be used for warfare.

Shortly afterwards "the church of St. Peter's situated in the market and the church of St. Guthlac, unsuitably situated within the circuit of the castle" were united to provide a new monastery, which was built by Bishop Robert de Bethune in the Bye Street suburb of the city. This new monastery has long since disappeared, being destroyed in 1537 during the dissolution in Henry VIII's reign. Eventually it was replaced by the County gaol, which was also demolished in 1930 and the

site is now occupied by the bus station and part of the County Hospital.

During 1154 Matilda's son, Henry 11, granted the "motte of Hereford with the whole castle" to Roger of Gloucester.

Later, in the following year, following a rebellion Henry resumed possession and the castle remained a royal castle, maintained by a sheriff for the rest of its history.

Documentary references for the repair and maintenance during the middle of the 12th century became more usual. Documentation shows that throughout the first half of the 13th century the castle appears to have been continually kept in good repair. From the occasional survey and accounts we can gain an indication of the works carried out on the castle buildings. The first part of the castle to be replaced in stone was a defected section of the wall. In 1181 a lime kiln had to be built to provide the necessary material to rebuild the damaged area of the wall. At the beginning of the 13th century the great keep was probably built on top of the western mound, at about the same time as a "small tower", which cost £100. The walls and bridges were in need of regular attention, and during 1239-40 a new tower had to be built to replace one that had collapsed. Although various parts of the castle had more than £100 spent on refurbishment during 1250 and 1252 this still appears to have been insufficient, as a survey taken in 1254 showed that there were still several major problems. The great tower roof and the steps leading up to the motte needed to be completely rebuilt and both gates leading to the castle needed urgent repairs. The south wall was also frequently in danger of being undermined by the River Wye, which meant that it was constantly in need of attention. The records show that the sheriff was given £60 to spend on the necessary repairs to the wall and to enable a quay to be built to protect the castle wall from slipping into the river, and also to complete the buttresses between the castle gate and the "new tower".

A description written in the 13th century helps us to realize the variety of buildings that were in the area now known as Castle Green at this time. The records tell us that there was the king's great hall, king's small hall, chambers for the king and queen and their knights, the county hall, an almonry, a counting house, a stable, two gaols, an exchequer chamber, a

building to house the siege engines and also the usual offices such as kitchen, bakery etc.

Between 1233 and 1260 the royal apartment were upgraded. Henry organized for a "fair and becoming chapel" which was 25 feet long to be built at the end of the oriel in his chamber and to be whitewashed and wainscoted. The queen's chamber was lengthened by 20 feet and also painted and wainscoted. She was also provided with a wardrobe, a fireplace and privy chamber. A new kitchen and a chamber for the king's clerks were also built.

There was also a second chapel within the bailey, dedicated to St Martin. This was probably the one that was partially excavated in 1960.

During the 1260s Hereford featured importantly in the Barons' Wars. At this time the castle was used for the headquarters of the Baronial Party with Peter de Montfort as its governor. Prince Edward, the eldest son of the king, after being taken prisoner with his father at the battle of Lewes, was brought by his captor, Simon de Montfort, Earl of Leicester to the castle. Edward was kept under light guard and was allowed to exercise on horseback on Widemarsh Common.

One day, after exhausting his guards' horses in races, he changed his horses for a fresher mount and escaped to Wigmore Castle home of the Mortimers.



The remains of Widemarsh Moor which was flooded in 1979. Prince Edward took his exercise on horseback here before escaping from Hereford Castle in 1265.

Resources : Hereford Learning and Resource Centre,
Hereford Reference Library, The Old House, Internet
Research,

History and Guide of Hereford by Ron Shoesmith,
The Castle Green at Hereford by David Whitehead,
Castles and Moated Sites of Hereford by Ron Shoesmith and
visits to the Castle Green

The Development Of Hereford Castle During 13th Century

During this period the castle underwent substantial repairs to the keep and the towers belonging to the inner bailey. The chapel dedicated to St. Martin that was also situated in the bailey, was substantially refurbished in 1283.

The Edwardian conquest of Wales that took place between 1277 and 1282 meant that Hereford castle lost much of its strategic importance.

The castle survey in 1291 and 1300 indicated that the roof timbers of the great hall were beginning to decay "due to the loss of lead and shingles". The roof of the county hall and the 65 feet curtain wall also were in need of attention. The almonry, which was built in 1233, also had by this time been demolished.

In 1307 twelve oaks and stone from the quarries at Haywood Forest were used to repair the king's houses in the castle and also the walls and towers.

It appears this must "have been purely a holding operation " for when the wife of Edward 11, Queen Isabella came to Hereford in 1326 she stayed in the Bishop's Palace as the castle had once again fell into disrepair. By 1377 the castle buildings became ruinous so that Richard 11 granted rights of pasture and herbage in the castle to Roger Ploughfield.

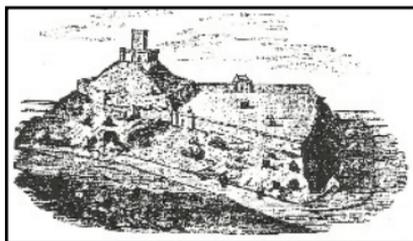
There was a renewed disaffection in Wales at the beginning of fifteenth century that led to the Owain Glyn Dwr uprising. This resulted in some major repairs being undertaken to the castle. The great tower was reroofed, the corner towers and chapel roof were repaired and a 140 foot long replacement oak paling fence was built alongside the river wall. To provide the wood for the wall 351 oak trees were felled in Haywood Forest.

After this last attempt to keep the castle in good repair it was gradually allowed to fall into decay.

100 years later Leland visited the city and recorded that "the hole castle tendithe toward ruine". He also noted that the main drawbridge was "clene downe". Although many of the buildings in the bailey area by this time had disappeared he gave a detailed description of the main parts of the castle.

In his records Leland describes both the motte and the bailey as being surrounded by water, this would have been fed by the stream that also encircled the city wall. He also describes the motte as being high and very strong with the outer wall having 10 towers and the inner wall one great tower. He tells us that the main entrance to the castle was about half-way north side of the bailey and that there was a great stone arch and a drawbridge in the middle to enter into the castle. His records also mention that there was a productive spring within the castle and with a brook that drove a mill.

It is interesting to note that John Speede showed in his map of 1610 the castle very much as it had been described by Leland over 60 years earlier.



Apart from the main gate and the water gate there were only two buildings in the bailey - a square tower and small building which is thought to be St Martin's Chapel.

Speede's map also shows the curtain walls still standing around the whole circuit, and the "great keep with its encircling, multi-towered high wall continued to overlook from the top of the large mound".

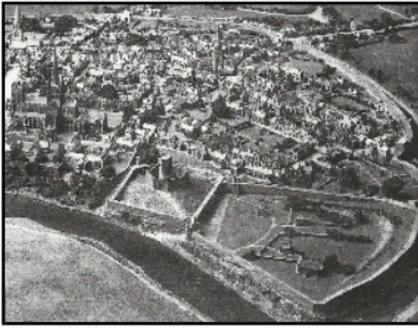
During the Civil War Herefordshire was essentially a royalist stronghold, although several of the leading families supported parliament.

In the September of 1642, the city was taken by surprise by the Earl of Stamford's army. They occupied the city for a short while before being forced to retreat to Gloucester.

By 1643, the city defences were again in need of some repair work - the ditch was only knee-deep and the gates had needed to be restored for sometime.

Unfortunately there seemed to be a lack of enthusiasm and co-operation amongst the people of Hereford to protect the city.

Several recommendations were made by Sir Richard Cave, a senior officer in Hereford, which included having a turnpike and strengthening the riverbank. He estimated that it would



Hereford in the early 17thC

take a hundred men two days to complete the work on the river bank.

Unfortunately nothing was done, and when Sir William Waller stormed the city Hereford immediately surrendered.

Waller and his troops didn't stay long in Hereford, which was soon re-occupied by

royalist troops. Following this the city was rapidly reinstated so that it would be in a position to resist a siege.

In 1645, the Battle of Naseby took place, which was the turning point in the war resulting in Prince Rupert retreating first to Hereford then to South Wales.

The Scottish Army, under the command of the Earl of Leven soon invested the town on all sides.

Apparently the efforts by Barnabas Scudamore to fortify the city had been successful, and fortunately the response by the citizens was very different to that of two years earlier. The city was now in a proper state of defence with a strong garrison

It is recorded that over a thousand citizens took up arms or mended the defences as they broken down. Even the women and children were enthusiastic in helping.

This defence of the city continued for at least five weeks, stemming attacks on the Wye Bridge by demolishing one of the arches and firing cannon from the castle.

The attacks were relentless, until hearing of the impending approach of King Charles with a relieving force. The Scottish Army finally retreated.

During his short visit to Hereford the king knighted Barnabas Scudamore for his resolute efforts in defending the city. Hereford was honoured with having a bordure of St. Andrew's and the motto *Invictae fidelitatis praemium* added to his arms.

It appears from documentation that although the castle probably played little part during the siege it must have been subjected to damage from the Scottish attack on the south side of the Wye and in the Bartomsham meadows.

It was only three months later that Colonel Birch took over Hereford, soon becoming governor of the city and taking up residence in the Bishop's Palace. It became obvious to Birch that there would be great difficulty in keeping the city under parliamentary control as the city had a predominately royalist citizenry. His solution was to take immediate steps to protect his garrison.

It can be concluded from the survey and valuation of the castle by the Surveyor General's office six years later in 1652, that the castle and surrounding area had benefited from some repairs to the outer walls and re-roofing of the main towers. Birch kept his garrison in the castle grounds for sometime after the war that indicates that some of the castle buildings must have been at least useable.

Eventually the castle was sold to Sir Richard Harley and several of his friends. It was intended to be for "*publique use and benefit, and the advantage of the countie of Hereford and the inhabitation thereof*". It wasn't long before Harley granted the castle to the Justices of Piece for the county. As the garrison moved out, the demolition contractors moved in. By 1653 a large part of the castle stone was moved to the collage of Hereford (the College of the Vicar's Choral) to build their new dining hall, and some to the city to build the Tolsey (Town Hall).



Twenty five years later John Sylvester prepared a plan of the castle showing his proposed alterations. From this we can conclude that most of the buildings had been demolished although the castle mound still survived. A few of the buildings also remained and the gatehouse that was situated on the northern side of the bailey was repaired before being used for the storage of the county records.