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Ground Plan of Dudley Castle, Staffordshire.

## NOTICE OF THE CASTLE AT DUDLEY.

ON the summit of a richly wooded hill which rises on the north-west side of the town stands the Castle of Dudley. Its ruined keep, as it towers above the thick and scarcely penetrable foliage, forms a pleasing and striking contrast with the highly practical character of the surrounding country. Although no part of the castle is of very great antiquity, and although its annals form comparatively but an insignificant item in the history of the Middle Ages, there is, nevertheless, much of archæological interest, not only in its architectural detail, but also in the fact of its presenting an example of a fortified structure erected during a period proverbially poor in this class of buildings. It is, therefore, with this view that I have endeavoured in the following remarks to draw attention rather to the building itself than to attempt any elucidation of its records; the few historical notices here given being collected from works already published.<sup>1</sup>

The first castle is said to have been erected during the Heptarchy—upwards of five centuries before the earliest portions of the present ruins were raised—by a certain noble named Dudo, or Dodo. The last Saxon possessor was Earl Edwin, from whom it was taken soon after the arrival of the Conqueror, and, together with numerous other manors in the county, given to William Fitz Ausculph, one of his followers. Upon his death, the castle with the manors attached to it, came into the possession of Fulk, son of Ralph Paganel, but whether by marriage or by royal grant does not appear. Ralph, the son and heir of Fulk Paganel, was the next possessor, and to him may be ascribed the foundation of the Cluniac Priory, whose ruins are so picturesquely situated on the western side of the Castle-hill. For although the monastery was not actually commenced till the reign of Henry II., c. 1161, its erection was, never-

<sup>1</sup> A descriptive and historical account of Dudley Castle was published by the Rev. Luke Booker, LL.D., Vicar of

Dudley, 1825. See also Shaw's History of Staffordshire, Camden's Britannia, &c.

theless, owing to the will of Ralph, the fulfilment of which his son Gervase had delayed until the turbulent times occasioned by the war between Stephen and Matilda—in which he held the castle against the former—had subsided, and the son of Maud had ascended the throne. Gervase having incurred the displeasure of Henry, the castle was demolished in 1175 by order of the King. Yet he retained possession of the manors, and two years subsequently payed to his sovereign the sum of 500 marks as a fine. Upon his death in 1195, John de Somery became possessed by his marriage with the heiress Hawise. It then passed to his son and heir, Ralph, on whose death in 1210 it descended to his eldest son, William de Somery, who died in 1222, leaving his son, Nicholas, in wardship. He dying (1229) without issue, the property fell into the hands of his uncle Roger, the second son of the last-mentioned Ralph. It was during the life of this first Roger de Somery that the present castle was commenced. It appears that he had not been in possession more than four years when a writ of seizure was issued at Wenlock, to hold the honour of Dudley and all the lands of the recusant baron for the King's use, in consequence of his refusing to appear before the King to receive the honour of knighthood. About thirty years after this we find him rebuilding the castle, and restoring it to its former strength. Most accounts agree that it was in the year 1261 that the work was commenced, but that the King prohibited it from being carried on without his special license, which he granted in 1263, in consideration, it is said, of Somery's adherence to the royal cause during the Barons' war, having been taken prisoner at the Battle of Lewes. He died in 1273, seised of the barony, and was buried in the priory. Those parts of the castle which were erected in his time are very clearly distinguishable from the later works; they consist of part of the keep, the great gateway, and a small portion of the *cingulum* or wall of enceinte. Of the same date is a fragment of an arch (marked A on the plan), that appears mixed up with the masonry of one of the internal walls of the domestic apartments; the hood moulding has been cut away to allow the plaster to be laid on. It will scarcely be necessary for the purpose of this paper to trace much further the genealogy of the various possessors. On the decease of Roger de Somery the castle descended to his

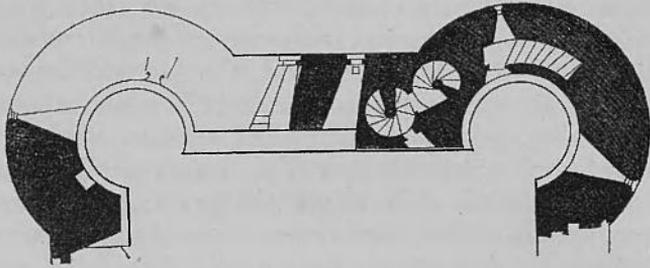
son Roger, by a second wife, whose eldest son, dying in his minority, it came into the possession of his second son, John, after whose death without issue in 1321 the estates were divided between his sisters, Margaret and Joan. The castle and town of Dudley, with the manors of Sedgeley and Kings-Swinford, and the chase of Pensnett, were assigned to Margaret, and by her transferred to her husband, John de Sutton. To him the erection of the barbican may be referred, but whether the building of the chapel took place during his life, or that of his son, is a subject for conjecture; the death of John de Sutton having occurred about the time that the later decorated or "curvilinear period" commenced. From the form of the doorway, and the character of the mouldings (if this part is original), I should be more inclined to consider it the work of the son who died in 1360.

From this time the builder's hand seems to have been comparatively idle; no further remains existing of an earlier date than the portions erected during the nefarious possession of John Dudley, Lord L'Isle, afterwards Earl of Warwick, and Duke of Northumberland. At his attainder and death in 1553, the castle and its estates devolved to the crown. By this means the Sutton family again became possessed; Edward, the son of the last of that name, being in favour with Mary, who granted it to him and to his heirs. To the Earl of Warwick may be referred the greater part of the later additions, whilst a few remains may be seen of a still later date, exhibiting marked and characteristic features of the Italian school. There also exist portions of the fortifications constructed by the royalists, as a further means of defence during the parliamentary war, at which time this castle held a somewhat prominent position, being one amongst the few which were maintained by the King until nearly the close of the struggle: not having surrendered before the 13th of May, 1646. Upon its capitulation, Sir William Brereton ordered it to be dismantled, but only so far as to render it incapable of receiving a garrison. The domestic or habitable parts of the building were destroyed by fire in 1750.

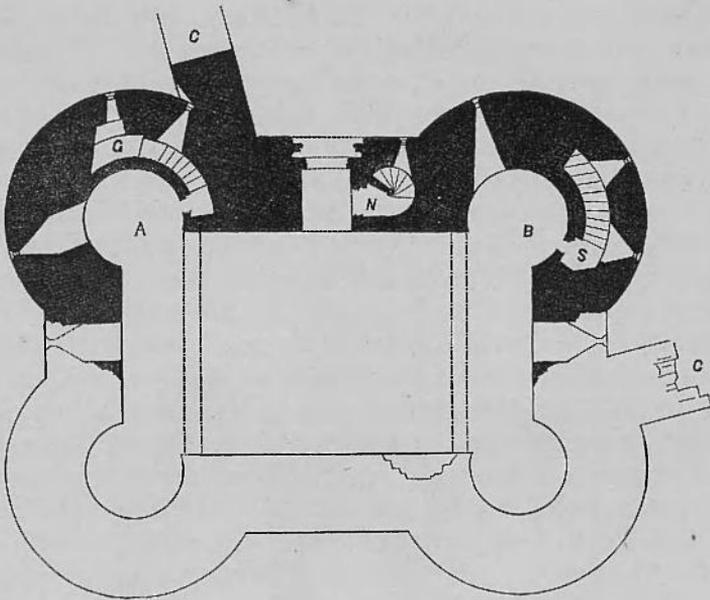
We will now proceed to examine the architecture and plan of the structure. The area of the castle is contained in an irregular polygon, enclosed by walls on every side. The greater part of the moat has been filled up, but on the west side it exists comparatively perfect. At the south-

west angle stands the keep, in the plan of which we recognise the type of the concentric, or Edwardian fortification : going eastward, in a north-east direction, we pass a fragment of the " Early English " wall, and some of the later buildings which lie between the keep and the principal gateway. Attached to the last-mentioned building are the interesting remains of the barbican. At a short distance farther on, at an angle of the enceinte, is the commencement of the domestic apartments. These occupy the whole of the eastern side of the bailey, and terminate in the chapel to the south, and the postern westward. Returning to the keep, which is raised on an artificial mound, we find it consists of a central parallelogram of two stories, with circular angle towers rising one story above the centre (see plans of each). The entrance is on the ground floor on the north side, under a segmental pointed arch of three orders, with continuous impost, and provided with holes for the stockade of timber, and with grooves for a portcullis—a somewhat unusual occurrence. Immediately within the gate on the east side is a segmental-headed doorway, leading to a spiral staircase (N) constructed in the thickness of the wall, which forms the only means of approach to the battlement, and which communicates with the upper floor of the central part of the keep : from this level a second staircase commences, which appears to have been entirely used as an approach to the battlement of the north-east tower, the other having originally led to the battlements of the central division and the north-west tower. On the ground floor of the tower A (see plan of keep), a pointed-headed doorway leads to a wall staircase (s) 3 feet wide, communicating with the second story through a concave corbel-headed doorway. At this level there is a set-off in the wall, apparently for the supporting timbers of the floor to rest on. The parapet of this tower and the upper part of the staircase which led to it, have been destroyed ; in the opposite tower (B) the general outline is, however, still retained. The merlons are unusually lofty and pierced by cross billets with trefoil terminations. The upper room is provided with a fireplace, and a square-headed window with convex corbels in the place of the scoinson arch. The ground floor of the tower has also a staircase, which leads to a garderobe (g) lighted by a small circular window, which appears to have been originally quatrefoliated. The corbels

DUDLEY CASTLE.



Plan of the First Floor of the Keep.



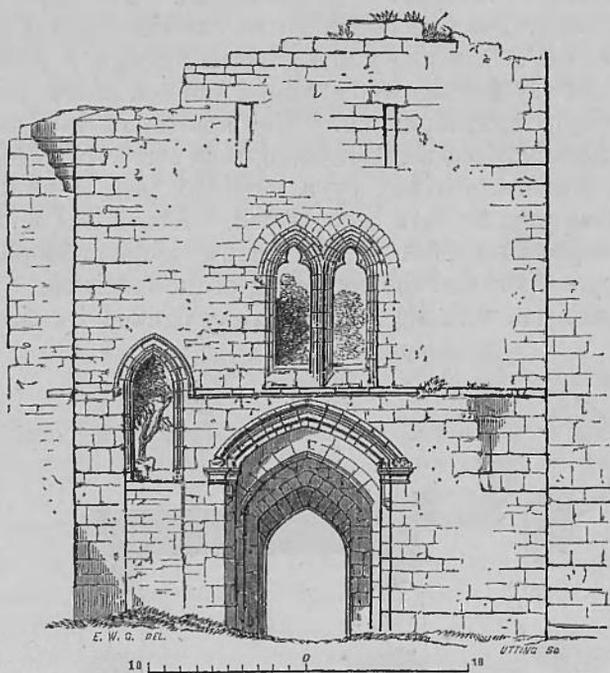
Ground Plan of the Keep.

Scale, 21 feet to 1 inch.

- c c Early English walls.
- g Garderobe.
- N Stairs to battlement.
- s Stairs to First Floor of Tower B.

for the support of the principal timbers of the central roof may still be traced. The chief apartment seems to have been lighted on each of the four sides by two single-light windows. Those on the north side are square-headed, with segmental pointed scoinson arches, moulded in a bold and effective manner. The east windows seem to have been similarly treated, with the exception of having segmental pointed heads on the outside. A few of the smaller windows of the keep are pointed and trefoiled with the plain soffit cusp; but the majority are square. The whole of the south side of the keep, with its towers, and the greater part of the curtain walls, east and west, are nearly level with the ground.

The great gateway, which consisted of three stories, is of

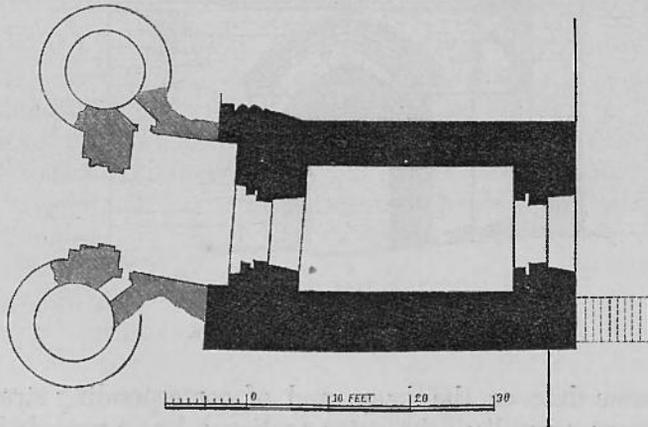


Inner side of Gateway, Dudley Castle.

the same date as the keep, and of corresponding strength, the inner, as well as the outer archway, being provided with

the portcullis groove : the former is consequently of a somewhat singular construction. The gates themselves having to open towards the court, necessarily required a rear vault, the strange novelty of which, not to mention the unsightly appearance of such an arrangement, has in this instance been judiciously treated by throwing across the opening an effective scoinson arch supported on short pillar corbels, and surmounted by a bold and well-moulded label. The outer arch of the gateway (see woodcut) is of three orders, moulded similarly to the keep entrance, and, like that, of a segmental form. It has, however, the addition of a hood-mould, with terminations composed of the usual trefoil foliage of the period. The wall in which this archway occurs is placed, as will be seen by the plan, somewhat out of the square, the better to command the western approach : this irregularity is still more obvious in the plan of the barbican. The upper part of the gateway was approached by an exterior flight of steps (shown dotted on the plan), and entered through a pointed-headed doorway, having well moulded and continuous jambs, and a simple hood-moulding. The apartment with which this communicates has a two-light, or more correctly speaking, a double window, divided by a moulded pier or mullion ; the heads appear to have been cusped. Above this, nothing remains beyond a portion of the narrow lights, or loopholes, of the upper floor, and the corbelling of the bartizans.

The barbican, with its lofty archway flanked by circular



Plan of the Gateway and Barbican.

towers is an interesting example of this peculiar feature in fortification, though it is much to be deplored that the ravages of war and time should have left it such a ruin. Of the towers, the foundations only are to be seen, whilst the "high-lifted" and delicately-moulded jambs of the outer order of the arch support nothing but the luxuriant moss or thriving weed, "— gray, but leafy walls, where ruin greenly dwells." The inner order of the arch is yet standing. It is of a very depressed three-centred form, but the mouldings are good and characteristic. From one of the towers a communication with a subterranean passage was discovered some years since, but it was blocked up soon after the discovery was made known. From an examination of the moat and the foundations of the gateway and barbican, it would seem, that when the latter was added, the course of the water was changed so as to surround the new work, and that consequently the drawbridge occupied the somewhat unusual position of being in advance of the barbican; while it is not improbable that the old moat may have been left dry, and that over it there may have been a second drawbridge between the barbican and great gateway, and that the doors in the angles of the towers communicated with open passages running parallel to the bridge.

We come now to the remains of the chapel, the most interesting feature of which is the west window,

" ——— hollow in the centre,  
Shorn of its glass of thousand colourings,  
Through which the deepen'd glories once could enter,"

but yet not so completely desolate, but that we can discern sufficient to enable us to form some idea of its former state. It appears to have been of three lights trefoliated, the crown of the heads of the lights reached to the springing of the window arch, which is equilateral, and contained three sexfoliated equilateral spherical triangles. The hood-moulding terminates at the springing of the lights. Immediately under the sill of the window is a stringcourse, which continues, uninterrupted, as far as the doorway in the south wall, where, although it is level with the impost, it is abruptly broken off, and the hood-moulding of the doorway carried round perfectly distinct. This, together with the form of the arch, which is ogeed, and the character of its moulded jamb,

would induce the opinion that the doorway is the work of a later period, the only entrance being originally from the domestic apartments. The crypt underneath the chapel requires little comment : it is entered from the south, and lighted from the west by two narrow square-headed openings. There have been various conjectures respecting the use to which it was appropriated, but that of its having been a place of sepulture seems the most probable. The domestic apartments immediately adjoining the chapel are of the same age, the stringcourse which passes under the chapel window continuing at a lower level along the west wall, until abruptly broken by the insertion of a late square-headed window. The remaining buildings are principally debased perpendicular, with here and there an addition of gothicised Italian of the very plainest character. There are, however, in the bay-window, features, which, although they have little intrinsic merit, present at least in their bold and picturesque character a pleasing contrast to the stiff square mass of building surrounding it. Upon the west-side of the bailey, some slight traces of building (foundation walls, corbels, &c.) may be seen, but they do not possess any features worthy of notice.

EDWARD WILLIAM GODWIN.