

THE DATE OF CLIFFORD'S TOWER

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In a note contributed to the *Archaeological Journal* in 1934¹ the late Mr. B. H. St. J. O'Neil stated a case for supposing that Clifford's Tower (or, as it was known until 1596, the King's Tower in the Castle of York) was built *c.* 1300–10. A main point in the argument was the absence, in the printed record sources then available, of any reference to the keep or *turris* of the castle prior to 1312. Unprinted sources do, however, contain a number of such references during the second half of the 13th century, and these, together with others which have appeared in some of the more recently published calendars, suggest that previous ideas about the dating of the tower may need to be revised. Mr. O'Neil therefore readily agreed to the present reconsideration of the problem in the light of the additional documentary material available. The principal record entries are set out in chronological order in an appendix and are referred to by letter as necessary.

The story begins in 1244. In July of that year King Henry III was at York on his way northward to Newcastle-on-Tyne. On 6 August an instruction was issued to the sheriff of York to spend certain items of county revenue on collecting materials for the strengthening of the castle (*a*). With the building season already well advanced, such an instruction can be interpreted as foreshadowing the commencement of actual works in the following year. A document of March, 1245 (*b*) confirms this. Master Simon and Master Henry,² the king's chief carpenter and mason respectively, were ordered to York at this time to view the site of the castle and to ordain and determine how the new castle buildings which the king proposed to erect should be best and most suitably set up. The sheriff was instructed to go to the site and consider with them how the castle should be strengthened and improved, taking with him other masters with expert knowledge of such works. He was then to be responsible for carrying out the building according to their ordinance and direction. It is clear that works of a major and far-reaching character were contemplated, amounting to a complete re-creation of the castle that had existed hitherto, and one would expect such a scheme to have included fortification of the motte which was the dominant feature of the site.

The works were duly put in hand and entries in the Liberate and Pipe Rolls between 1245 and 1250 record the necessary financial provision

¹ *Arch. Journ.*, xci, pp. 296–300. Mr. O'Neil read the present paper in typescript and adopted its conclusions in the 1954 reprint of his *Official Guide*.

² For Master Henry the mason, see W. R. Lethaby. *Westminster Abbey Re-examined* (London, 1925), pp. 81–93. Lethaby, while leaving open the question whether his surname

'de Reysn' was derived from Rayne, co. Essex, or from Reims, argues strongly for Henry's English origin. It is, however, worthy of remark that his first appearance in the records as master of the king's masons comes within three months of Henry III's return from a year's absence in France. Cf. H. F. Westlake, *Westminster Abbey* (London, 1923), i, pp. 69–75.

(*c, e-m, o*). By April, 1246, older buildings had already been demolished to make way for new (*d*). By midsummer, 1250, lead was being ordered from the Peak district (*n*), an indication that some of the new building was approaching the roofing stage; when, later in the year, the promised supply was not forthcoming, the sheriff was instructed to obtain lead locally (*g*). At the same time 20 oaks were supplied for making roofing boards for the castle towers (*p*). The first reference to work on the keep or great tower of the castle occurs early in the following year, when the building is specifically mentioned in an order to the sheriff to allocate 300 marks to the keepers of the works *ad operationes castri nostri et turris inde faciendas* (*r*). Work on the keep was thus being provided for at least as early as the 1251 season; there is, however, nothing to show that it may not have been progressing along with the rest of the operations since 1245. Financial provision for the works continues to be recorded from time to time during the period 1251-4 (*s, t, w, x, z, bb, cc*), and quantities of oak were supplied from the royal forests (*y, aa*). The presence of the king at York for the Christmas celebration in 1251 coincides with two retirements and new appointments in the local works supervisory committee (*u, v*), changes which, when considered in the light of other indications (e.g. *hh, pp* below), may reflect official dissatisfaction at the slow progress of the work.

In August, 1255, that is to say when building was in its eleventh season, instructions were sent to the sheriff to cover in the works against the onset of winter and to stock up with stone and lime for continuing operations in the following summer (*dd*). A mandate of February, 1256, (*ee*) seems from its wording to have been aimed at providing regular funds for the works until they were finished, and suggests that completion was at that time at least thought to be in sight. Later in the year the current provision was stepped up (*gg*), and at the same time the four viewers of the works, all of them York citizens, were exhorted to be diligent in their duties (*ff*).

It is evident from the documents that follow that by 1257 the bulk of the work envisaged in 1245 had been carried out, and that all that now remained was to finish the job. But the final drive was lacking and completion hung fire. The king had several times told the sheriff to get the castle completed, but the sheriff, so the king was informed, was not doing much about it (*modicum inde fecerit*) (*hh*). Roger Thurkelby, a justice in eyre, was accordingly instructed to get hold of the sheriff, go to the castle with him, and make a personal inspection and report. With the advice of honest and law-abiding men, and by his own industry, he was to find out what it would cost to get the work finished; having done so, he was to let the sheriff have the necessary funds from the amercements of the Yorkshire eyre and inform the king so that arrangements could be made to allocate them to the completion of the castle. Instructions to this end continued to be issued (*mm, qq*) and expenditure recorded (*ii-ll, nn, rr*). In 1259 there is a further

reference to the keep, for which, with other buildings in the castle, timber for joists and other requirements was to be supplied (*oo*). Some months later, in August, 1260, we read of the removal of one of the viewers of the works because of inability to attend properly to his duties (*pp*). No doubt human failures of this kind were a contributory factor in the general story of slow progress. There is evidence of the works being continued during the following two years (*qq*, *rr*), after which, probably under the stress of the Barons' Wars, they appear to have lapsed altogether.

Not until 1269 is there any sign of a resumption. The king was at York in September, 1268, and in the following May orders were given for works in which the keep and its bridge receive individual mention (*ss*). Timber for putting the keep in repair was allocated in 1271 (*tt*), and the Pipe Roll of the following year records the expenditure of no less than £131 on works on the keep alone (*uu*). A rather fuller record on the contemporary K.R. Memoranda Roll shows that this sum was 'for finishing a certain part of the keep' (*vv*), and there can be no reasonable doubt that we have here direct evidence that Clifford's Tower was by this time (1272) substantially a completed building. On the showing of the whole sequence of records quoted, one might perhaps not unreasonably infer that the greater part of the tower had already been built in gradual stages between 1245 and 1262, that it was then left unfinished, and that the work was then finally rounded off after a seven year interval. Whether in fact it was ever completed in the sense of being carried to the height originally intended is a question that naturally arises but to which no answer can be given. One suspects that such a structure may well have been meant to have a third storey.

After 1272 the records in which works payments are normally encountered, viz., the Exchequer Accounts, Exchequer and Chancery Miscellanea, and the Pipe, Liberate and Memoranda Rolls, have not been found to contain any significant reference to works at York castle, although all the series named down to at least 1315 have been scanned with an eye watchful for York references. Unreliable as the argument *a silentio* may often be, the fullness of the records generally during these years is such that it is inconceivable that a structure of the magnitude of Clifford's Tower could have been erected in a place as important as York during the reign of Edward I without the work being referred to in one or more of these sources, if not in the more familiar chancery enrolments. On a considered view, therefore, it would seem that the documentary evidence must be accepted as showing that the tower belongs to, say, the last 25 years of the reign of Henry III and not to that of his son or grandson. Such evidence must necessarily control that suggested by the resemblance of architectural details to similar details in other structures.

There is a casual reference in a document of 1298 (*ww*) which, were it necessary, would confirm the existence of the keep at that date, when

it played its part in the adaptation of the castle to house the royal exchequer, temporarily transferred from Westminster to York during the Scottish War :¹ the tower was to be made ready for the treasury of the receipt and provided with bars, locks and anything else lacking for the treasure's security and safe-keeping. Finally, there is the writ of 1312 (*xx*), three operative words of which were omitted when it was printed previously.² Any possible doubt as to its correct interpretation is removed when it is read in conjunction with the preceding records. It is quite clear that the building which it refers to as being newly constructed, and which is to be roofed with lead, is the chapel within the keep and not the keep itself.

The result of this enquiry is thus to confirm the provisional verdict of Mrs. E. S. Armitage who, on the limited evidence of the Pipe Rolls and without knowing that on one occasion they actually referred to the *turris* by name (*t*), claimed more than 40 years ago that Clifford's Tower was in the main a work of the 30th–43rd years of Henry III.³ The chapel, which Mr. O'Neil noted in 1934 as bearing evident marks of a reconstruction in which mid 13th-century detail has been cut about and reused, may be presumed in the light of the concluding document quoted to have achieved its present form shortly before the year 1312. It is likely enough that the reused material was originally made for the chapel on whose completion expenditure is recorded in 1258 (*ll*).

APPENDIX OF DOCUMENTS

- (a). 6 Aug., 1244. *De castro Eboraci firmando*.—Mandatum est vice-comiti Eboraci quod de americiamentis que provenient de assisis nove disseisine que arramiate sunt in comitatu suo, et que venient coram rege in proximo adventu suo usque Eboracum, fieri faciat attractum ad castrum Eboraci firmandum. (*Close Rolls, 1242–7, p. 218.*)
- (b). 13 Mar., 1245. *De quodam castro apud Ebor' faciendo*.—Rex mittit usque Ebor' Magistrum Simonem carpentarium et Magistrum Henricum cementarium, ad videndum situm castris ibidem, et ad ordinandum et disponendum qualiter castrum, quod de novo rex ibidem firmare proposuit, melius et competencius firmari possit, et mandatum est vicecomiti Eboraci quod, assumptis secum aliis magistris in consimilibus scienciis expertis, una cum ipsis accedat ad videndum situm ejusdem castris et qualiter illud securius et melius possit firmari, et secundum ordinationem et dispositionem eorum castrum predictum firmari faciat. (*Close Rolls, 1242–7, p. 293.*)
- (c). 14 Feb., 1246. To the sheriff of York.—*Contrabreve* to cause the keepers of the king's works at York castle to have 200 marks out of the farm of the city. (*Cal. Liberate Rolls, 1245–51, p. 26.*)
- (d). 20 Apr., 1246. Mandatum est vicecomiti Ebor' quod permittat Johannem capellanum de Middelham habere petram maeremium et plumbum que posuerat in quadam gaiola et capella ultra eandem gaiolam construendis apud Ebor', et que jam dirrute sunt occasione castris regis quod construi faciat ibidem, et si quid inde amotum fuerit ei id reddi faciat. (*Close Rolls, 1242–7, p. 413.*)

¹ For this and similar transfers, see Dorothy M. Broome, *Exchequer Migrations to York in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries*, in *Essays . . . presented to T. F. Tout* (Manchester, 1925), pp. 291–300.

² *Arch. Journ.*, xci, p. 300.

³ Ella S. Armitage, *Early Norman Castles of the British Isles* (London, 1912), pp. 245–6. Mrs. Armitage apparently derived her information about the York works entries in the Pipe

Rolls from T. F. Cooper (cf. *ibid.*, pp. x–xi), but Cooper, in his *History of the Castle of York*, p. 34, overlooked the one Pipe Roll entry (that for 1250–51) in which mention of works on the *turris* occurs. As the paragraph in which it appears does not correspond with those in which payments for the castle works are recorded on the rolls of the preceding years, this particular entry is easily missed.

- (e). Mich., 1246. Et in attractis faciendis ad operationes castri de Ebor', CC.marc' per breve Regis. Et in eodem castro firmando, CC. marc' per breve Regis. Et custodibus operacionum castri Ebor' CC. marc' per breve Regis. (Pipe Roll, 90, m. 4).
- (f). 5 Jan., 1247. To the sheriff of York.—*Contrabreve* to spend 200 marks out of the issues of his country on the construction (*structura*) of York Castle. (*Cal. Lib. R., 1245-51, p. 102*).
- (g). 18 Jul., 1247. To the sheriff of York.—*Contrabreve* to spend 200 marks on the works of York castle. (*Ibid., p. 133*).
- (h). Mich., 1247. Et in operacionibus et structura castri Ebor' CCCC. marc' per ij brevia Regis et visum et testimonium Thome le Graunt et Roberti Gra. (Pipe Roll 91, m. 2).
- (i). 26 Dec., 1247. Order to sheriff to spend 300 marks out of the issues of the county on the works of York castle. (*Cal. Lib. R., 1245-51, p. 157*).
- (k). Mich., 1248. Et in operacionibus castri Ebor' CCC. marc' per breve Regis et visum et testimonium Martini de Norf' et Thome le Gra. (Pipe Roll 92, m. 14).
- (l). Mich., 1249. Et in operacionibus castri Ebor' quarum particulas liberavit in thesauro CCC. marc' per breve Regis et visum et testimonium Simonis Aky et Henrici Hoenser. (Pipe Roll 93, m. 9).
- (m). 18 Jun., 1250. Order to sheriff to spend up to 300 marks on the works of York castle. (*Cal. Lib. R., 1245-51, p. 292*).
- (n). 28 Jun., 1250. Order to bailiff of the Peak to deliver 20 fothers of lead for the works of York castle. (*Cal. Lib. R., 1245-51, p. 293*).
- (o). Mich., 1250. Et in operacionibus castri Ebor' quarum particulas liberavit in thesauro CCC. marc' per breve Regis et visum et testimonium Thome le Graunt et Roberti Gra. (Pipe Roll 94, m. 16).
- (p). 2 Nov., 1250. Order to deliver 20 oaks 'ad faciendum inde bordum ad cooperiendum turre in castro regis Eboraci'. (*Close Rolls, 1247-51, p. 372*).
- (q). 3 Nov., 1250. Order to sheriff of York to buy lead locally, that due from the bailiff of the Peak not having been delivered. (*Ibid., p. 373*).
- (r). 6 Feb., 1251. *De denariis liberandis ad operaciones Ebor'*.—Rex vicecomiti Ebor' salutem. Precipimus tibi quod de exitibus itineris iustic' nostrorum foreste facias habere custodibus operacionum nostrarum Ebor' CCC. marcas ad operaciones castri nostri et turris inde faciendas. (Liberate Roll 27, m. 13).
- (s). 6 Sep., 1251. Order to sheriff to receive 200 *l.* out of the amercement of the clerks of the diocese in the last forest eyre of the county and deliver them to the keepers of the works of York castle to carry out those works by view of lawful men. (*Cal. Lib. R., 1245-51, p. 374*).
- (t). Mich., 1251. Et custodibus operacionum Regis ad operaciones castri et turris Ebor' CCC. marc' per breve Regis. Et eisdem ad easdem xxx.li.xix.s.iiij.d. per breve Regis. Deliberand' eisdem CC. li. de amerciamentis clericorum de eodem Itinere. (Pipe Roll 95, m. 15d.).
- (u). 26 Dec., 1251. Hugh Sampson of York substituted for Robert le Gra as a 'visor operacionum castri regis Eboraci'. (*Close Rolls, 1251-3, p. 182*).
- (v). 4 Jan., 1252. William de Hibernia similarly substituted for Serlo de Stengate. (*Ibid., p. 185*).
- (w). 6 Jan., 1252. Order to sheriff to spend up to 300 marks on the works at York castle. (Liberate Roll 28, m. 16).
- (x). 8 Jan., 1252. Order to sheriff to spend 200 marks as above in addition to the money previously sent to him (*Ibid.*).
- (y). 20 Apr., 1252. Mandate to let the keepers of the works of York castle have 40 oaks. (*Close Rolls, 1251-3, p. 77*).
- (z). 22 Jan., 1253. Order to sheriff to pay 200 *l.* out of the issues of the eyre in his county for the works of York castle. (Liberate Roll 29, m. 11).
- (aa). 2 Apr., 1253. Mandate to provide 40 oaks 'ad reparacionem castri regis Ebor' '. (*Close Rolls, 1251-3, p. 337*).
- (bb). Mich., 1253. Et custodibus operacionum castri Ebor' ad esadem operaciones faciendas, CC. li. per breve Regis. (Pipe Roll 97, m. 11d.).
- (cc). Mich., 1254. Et in operacionibus castri Ebor' cooperiendis, viij.li.et.xx.d. per breve Regis et visum et testimonium Hugonis Sampson et Roberti Verdenel. (Pipe Roll 98, m. 19).
- (dd). 18 Aug., 1255. Rex vicecomiti Ebor' salutem. Precipimus tibi quod sine dilacione cooperiri facias operaciones castri nostri Ebor' ubi necesse fuerit propter instantem hyemem et attractum facias de petra et calce contra estatem proximo futuram ad easdem operaciones faciendas. (Liberate Roll 31).
- (ee). 19 Feb., 1256. Order to sheriff of York to spend, so long as he is sheriff, 100 marks a year 'in operacionibus castri nostri Ebor' donec eedem operaciones perficiantur'. (Liberate Roll 32).

- (ff). 5 May, 1256. Mandate to Jeremy de Brettegat, Robert Verdenel, William de Acum and Hugh Sampson, citizens of York, 'quos rex constituit ad intendendum custodie operacionum castri regis Eboraci et ad videndum omnes receptas et misas earundem operacionum'. to do their duties faithfully and diligently, 'sicut alii visores earundem operacionum facere consueverunt'. (*Close Rolls*, 1254-6, pp. 298-9).
- (gg). 5 May, 1256. Order to sheriff of York to spend an additional 50 marks on the castle works at York this year. (*Ibid.*).
- (hh). 20 Oct., 1257. Cum rex pluries preceperit vicecomiti Ebor' quod perfici faceret castrum regis Eboraci, et ipse vicecomes, ut rex audivit, modicum inde fecerit; mandatam est Rogero de Thork', quod, assumpto cum eo vicecomite illo, personaliter accedat ad castrum illud, et per probos et legales homines et per industrias suas, videat pro quanto castrum illud perfici valeat; et, quod ad hoc necesse fuerit, habere faciat eidem vicecomiti de amerciamenis itineris sui in comitatu predicto. Et sub sigillo regi scire faciat quantum eidem vicecomiti ad hoc habere fecerit, ut rex illud ei faciat allocari. Et, si racionabiliter levare possit illas C. marcas quas regi significavit, rex inde vult quod eas levare faciat, et quod illas ad perfeccionem castri predicti apponat. (*Close Rolls*, 1256-9, p. 156).
- (ii). Mich., 1258. Et in operacionibus Regis in castro Ebor' C.iiiij^{xx}.xvij.li.iiij.s.x.d. per breve Regis et visum et testimonium Jerem' de Brettegat et Roberti Verdonel per predictum tempus (sc. de duobus annis preteritis), scilicet per breve Regis de ponendo singulis annis C. marcas in eisdem operacionibus quamdiu fuerit vicecomes Ebor'. (Pipe Roll 102, m. 19).
- (kk). Mich., 1258. Et in coopertura operacionum Regis in castro Ebor' et attractu petre et calcis ad easdem operaciones x.li.xj.s.vj.d. per idem breve per allocationem in itinere Ebor', in itinere J. abbatis de Burgo. (Pipe Roll 102, m. 19).
- (ll). Mich., 1258. Et in capella Regis in castro Ebor' perficienda C.ix.s.et.iiij.d., per breve Regis per quod allocantur xxx.li.viii.s.iiij.d.ob. in operacionibus eiusdem capelle. (Pipe Roll 102, m. 20d.).
- (mm). 4 Feb., 1259. Order to sheriff of York to spend £100 of the issues of the county 'in operacionibus castri nostri Ebor' perficiendis'. (Liberate Roll 35).
- (nn). Mich., 1259. Et in operacionibus castri Ebor' perficiendis iiiij^{xx} et viij.li.iiij.s.et.iiij.d., per breve Regis et visum et testimonium Germani de Bretegate et Hugonis Sampson. (Pipe Roll 103, m. 17).
- (oo). 5 Nov., 1259. Mandate to allow sheriff of York to have 40 oaks 'ad gistas et alia ad reparacionem domorum et turris castri regis Eboraci necessaria inde facienda'. (*Close Rolls*, 1259-61, p. 8).
- (pp). 2 Aug., 1260. Removal from office of William de Akum', one of the viewers of the works of York castle, 'quia, propter infirmitatem et imbecillitatem corporis sui, dictis operacionibus regis minus sufficienter intendere potest'. (*Ibid.*, p. 89).
- (qq). 20 Aug., 1261. Order to sheriff of York to spend up to 100 marks of the issues of the county on the works of the castle. (Liberate Roll 37, m. 4).
- (rr). Mich., 1262. Et in muris et kernellis castri Ebor' cooperiendis, reparacione gayole et domorum eiusdem castri, et in attractur' calcis et aliorum necessariorum ad operaciones Regis in eodem castro xxxiiij.li.et.vj.s. per breve Regis et visum et testimonium Hugonis Sampson et Roberti Verdonel. (Pipe Roll 106, m. 2).
- (ss). 18 May, 1269. Rex vicecomiti Ebor' salutem. Precipimus quod de exitibus comitatus predicti Turrim castri nostri Ebor' et pontem eiusdem turris et omnes domus dicti castri reparari et emendari facias reparacione et emendacione quibus necessario indigent. (Liberate Roll 45).
- (tt). 26 Oct., 1271. Mandatum est Galfrido de Nevill', iusticiario foreste ultra Trentam, quod in foresta de Gautres faciat habere vicecomiti Ebor' quadraginta bonas quercus aptas ad maeremium cum escaetis ad Turrim Eboraci inde reparandam. (*Close Rolls* 1268-72, pp. 383-4).
- (uu). 1271-2. Et in operacione turris castri Eboraci C.xxx.li.xix.s.vij.d., per breve Regis et visum et testamentum Roberti de Witeby et Roberti de Verdenel. (Pipe Roll 116, m. 22d.).
- (vv). 1272-3. Robertus de Wytubi et Robertus Verdenel, visores operacionum regis castri Eboraci, aff' mar' pro C.xxx.li.xix.s.vij.d. positus in quadam parte turris castri predicti perficienda, per Rogerum Extraneum vicecomitem. (Exchequer K.R. Memoranda Roll 47, m. 7).
- (ww). 29 Apr., 1298. *De scaccario Regis ordinando apud Eboracum.*—Rex Vicecomiti Ebor' salutem. Volentes quibusdam de causis scaccarium nostrum unacum recepta et Banco usque ad civitatem nostram Ebor' transferendum, tibi precipimus quod statim visis litteris quamdā Halam amplam et sufficientem infra castrum nostrum Ebor' pro placitis dicti Banci nostri tenendis, unacum illis que pro sedibus iustic' et Baron' et aliis locum illum spectantibus sunt necessaria, construi et levare facias, et aulam nostram eiusdem castri pro scaccario nostro

in loco competenti unacum scaccario quadrato et sedibus in circuitu pro Thesaurario, Baronibus, Clericis et aliis ministris nostris ibidem, et barrera pro placitantibus et circumstare debentibus, et Turrim dicti castri nostri pro recepta nostra hostiis, barris et ceruris et aliis quibus est indigenda pro securitate et saluacione thesauri nostri ibidem deponendi facias parari, prout Johannes Dymmok hostiarius scaccarii nostri plenius ex parte nostra tibi exponet. Et custum quod ad hoc posueris nos super computum tuum proximo ad idem scaccarium nostrum tibi faciemus allocari, et hoc nullo modo omittas. (Exchequer K.R. Memoranda Roll 71, m. 14d.).

(xx). 29 May, 1312.

Precipimus tibi quod de exitibus ballive tue pelum et fossatum iuxta castrum nostrum Ebor' quos nuper incipi fecimus sine dilacione perfici ac capellam infra turrim castri predicti de nouo constructam plumbo cooperiri facias. (Close Roll, 5 Edw. II, m. 4).