

## The Castle of the Peak, and the Pipe Rolls.\*

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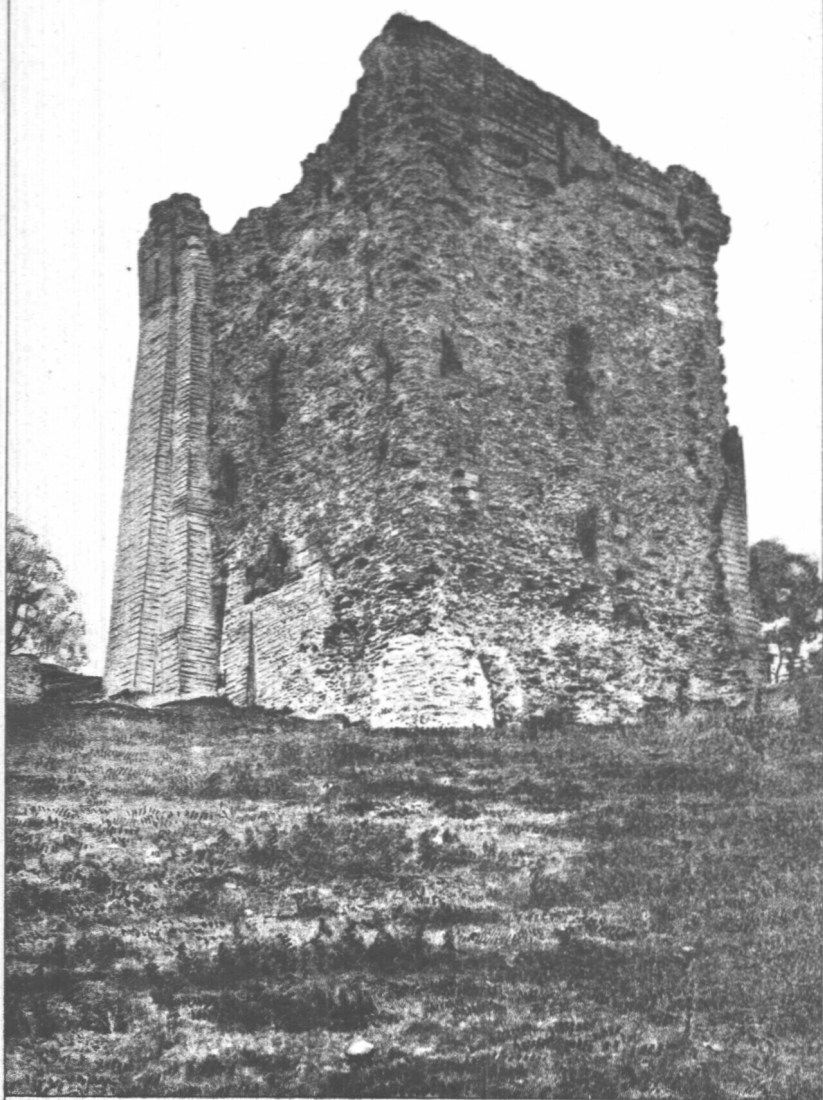


THE Castle of the Peak, as it was anciently called, is familiar to most people, at least in name, from Sir Walter Scott's novel, *Peveril of the Peak*. But alas for the truth of the romance! the novelist's castle is not the well-nigh impregnable fortress that kept guard over the "Peaclond," but the charming medieval house that we know as Haddon Hall.

According to Domesday Survey, where the earliest mention of the Peak Castle occurs, at the time of the Norman Conquest, Gernebern and Hundinc held the land of William Peverel's Castle in Pechefers.† Who Gernebern and Hundinc were does not concern us now, neither need we enter into the difficult question of the parentage of William Peverel. Mr. Freeman is content to describe him as "a Norman adventurer of unknown origin, who became one of the greatest landowners in Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire." Whoever he was, he certainly stood high in the favour of William the Conqueror, for after the submission of Nottingham in 1068, in the course of the conquest of the North, the king "wrought a castle" there, and it was to Peverel's hand that the command of so important a stronghold was entrusted.

\* Abstract of a paper read to the members of the Derbyshire Archæological Society, at the Castle of the Peak, on August 13th, 1887.

† Terram castelli in pechefers Willelmi Peurel tenuerunt Gernebern et Hundinc.



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THE KEEP OF THE CASTLE OF THE PEAK.

It was at this time, also, that William granted to Peverel the numerous lordships in Derbyshire and other counties, which constituted what was known as the Honor of Peverel. Included in this, was the land where William Peverel erected his Castle of the Peak.

On the south side of the vale of Hope, close to where Mam Tor raises its ever-crumbling head, is a height of less elevation than most of those around it, but one nevertheless of singular natural strength. Its west side is a frightful precipice, at whose foot is the yawning mouth of the great cavern called the Devil's Hole. The south side, if it be not so precipitous, is equally inaccessible; whilst the end and side towards the valley are sufficiently steep to render the ascent toilsome and the attack difficult.

It was on the top of this strong position that William Peverel built his castle. The term castle, it must be remembered, does not mean the later tower erected on the highest point, but is the usual term for any fortified position, and, therefore, refers to the whole area within the walls. The Conqueror and his barons appear to have employed two classes of castles—one always constructed in masonry, the other very often with only wooden defences. Where a castle was built on an old site, they seem to have contented themselves with repairing the existing works, which were usually of earth, with timber palisading on the top, and with an external ditch. If, as was often the case, these earthworks included a mound, it was fortified with a shell or circular keep of masonry. The latter work, however, was frequently postponed, and wooden defences temporarily set up. When, on the other hand, as was the case here, the castle was built on a new site, masonry was employed for the outer works, and a rectangular keep built where necessary. It was the policy of the Conqueror, on obtaining possession of a district, to fortify such strong places as might be essential to hold it. This was done either by the king himself, as at Nottingham and elsewhere, or the barons to whom the lands were allotted were allowed to do so for the security of their new possessions.

Thus it came to pass that William Peverel built his Castle of the Peak, apparently on an entirely new site, as there are no signs of earlier works. It was, however, a building of a purely military character, intended to shelter only a small garrison, and probably consisted merely of a curtain wall of stone round the top of the hill, with lodgings within for the defenders.

On Peverel's death, which took place about 1114, all his vast possessions passed to his son, William Peverel the younger. What was done to the Castle of the Peak during the latter's tenure is not known. In 1115, according to Matthew Paris and Ralph de Diceto, Peverel was disinherited by the king for poisoning Ranulph earl of Chester, and all his estates and possessions were forfeited to the Crown.

From this date the history of the Castle of the Peak may be easily followed from the entries relating to it on the Pipe Rolls.

The first undoubted entry relating to it is in the 3rd of Henry II. (1157)—

*In liberatione ij vigilum et portarii de Pech, iiii li. et xs.*

That is "in payment of 2 watchmen and the porter of the Peak, £4 10s."

This annual charge continues for a long series of years, even after the castle had been strengthened by the addition of the keep and other works.

In the same year (1157) the king himself was at the Castle of the Peak, where he received the submission of Malcolm, King of Scotland.

The sheriff's expenses are duly entered on the Pipe Roll—

*In adquietatione Corredii Regis apud Pech per Nigellum de Broc. x.li. et xvi*d*. Et in adquietatione Corredii Regis Scotie de Notingheham et de Pech. xxxvii.li. et xii*s*. et iii*d*. per breve Regis. Et in Soltis pro vino apud Pech lxxii*s*. per breve Regis.*

In plain English, the king's board and lodging cost £10 1*s*. 4*d*.; that of the king of Scotland here and at Nottingham cost £37 1*2s*. 3*d*.; and the bill for the wine provided for the occasion at the Peak castle was 7*2s*.

The king appears to have been here again in the following year (1158), for the sheriff enters on the Pipe Roll a charge of £36 5s. "In corredium Regis apud Pech."

In 1164 the Castle of the Peak was a third time visited by the king, his expenses being returned to the sheriff as £8 8s. 2d.

No specific notice of the castle occurs until 19 Henry II. (1173). In that year the rising of the barons necessitated strong measures being taken by the king, and the royal castles generally were ordered to be provisioned and garrisoned. Such a chain of fortresses as the Castles of the Peak, Bolsover, and Nottingham were of course duly strengthened and garrisoned, and the cost entered on the Pipe Roll, but the charges are not always separately given for each castle. The items are as follows:—

In the provisioning of the Castle of the Peak: for 20 seams\* of corn, 50s. 6d.; for 20 bacons, 39s.

Twenty knights received for 20 days £20, or the unusually high rate of pay of 1s. a day per man.

On the works of the castles of the Peak and Bolsover were spent sums of 40s., £46 10s., and £41 10s. 3d., or £90 in all, and the payments of the knights and servants at Nottingham, Bolsover, and the Peak amounted to £135. The Pipe Roll for the following year, 20 Henry II. (1174), contains further entries of a similar kind. £70 was paid to 20 knights and 60 servants at Nottingham, Bolsover, and the Peak, and a further sum of £24 was laid out on the works at the Peak and Bolsover.

The original entries for these two years are as follows:—

19 HENRY II. In warnisione Castelli de Pech pro xx, summis frumenti 1s. et vjd. Et pro xx. Baconibus xxxixs. per breve Ricardi de Luci.

Et xx. militibus xx. fi de liberatione xx. dierum per breve Ricardi de Luci. de quibus xvij. libras sunt de firma comitatus.

In liberatione militum et servientium de Bolesoura et de Pech xx. ti per breve Regis quod continet numerum et terminum eorundem militum et servientium.

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\* A seam is eight bushels.

Et Reginaldo de Luci xls. ad faciendum operat' Castellorum Regis de Bolesoura et de Pech per breve Ricardi de Luci quod habuit de liberatione ipsius Reginaldi.

Et In liberatione ij. vigilum et j. portarij de Pech xlvs. de dimidio anno.

Et Reginaldo de Lucy xlvj. fi et xs. ad faciendum operat' Castellorum Regis de Bolesoura et de Pech per breve Ricardi de Luci.

Et in operat' Castellorum de Bolesoura et de Pech xlj. fi et xs. et iij*d.* per breve Regis et per visum Roberti Avenelli et Roberti de Hopa et Serlonis de Pleseleia et Gervasii Avenelli.

Et In liberatione militum et servientium de Notingham et de Bolesoura et de Pech c. et xxxv. fi per breve Regis quod continet numerum et terminum eorundem militum et servientium.

20 HENRY II. Et Reginaldo de Luci xxv. fi ad faciendum prest' xx. militum et lx. servientium ped residentibus in castellis Regis de Notingham et de Bolesoura et de Pech per breve Ricardi de Luci.

Et Item eidem Reginaldo xxv. fi ad faciendum prest' eisdem militibus et eisdem servientibus in eisdem castellis per breve Ricardi de Luci. Et In liberatione ij. vigilum et j. Portarij de Pech iiiij. fi et xs.

Et In Operat' Castellorum de Pech et de Bolesoura xxiiij. fi per breve Regis et per visum Roberti Avenelli et Serlonis de Pleseleia.

What these works were is uncertain. With Bolsover we are not now concerned, but the outlay on the castle of the Peak was perhaps for re-building and strengthening, where necessary, the curtain wall built by Peverel and its immediate defences, such as the gate-houses, etc.

In 1175 a chamber was constructed in the Castle of the Peak at a cost of £4 17s., under the superintendence of Robert Avenel and Serlo de Pleasley.

The Pipe Roll for the next year, 22 Henry II. (1176), brings us to an entry of great interest, namely, that which records the building of the keep, or Tower, as it is called.

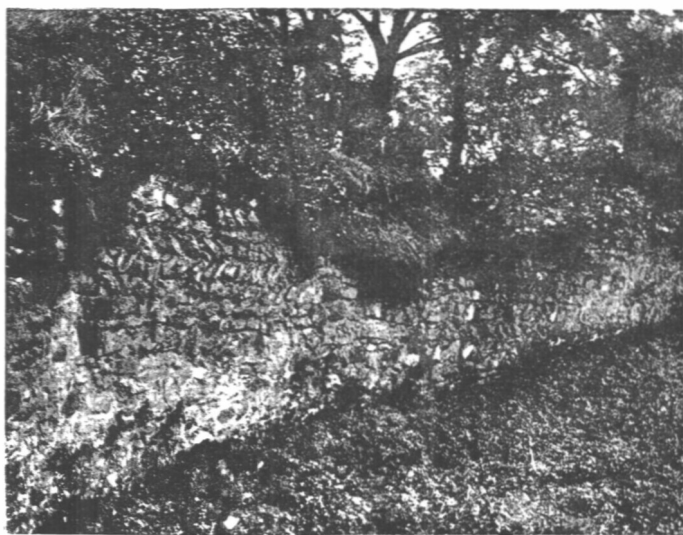
Et In Operatione Turris in Castello de Pech c. et xxxv. fi per breve Regis et per visum Roberti de Hoppa et Warini filii Roberti et Willelmi Avenelli et Gervasii Avenelli et Roberii de Herthil.

The cost was £135, equivalent to at least £3,000 of our money. A further sum of £49 was spent the following year (1177) on the works of the castle, which was apparently then completed, as no entries of importance occur on the Pipe Rolls

during at least the next twenty years, beyond the usual annual charge of £4 10s. for the two watchmen and the porter.

The later Rolls I have not yet been able to examine.

The Rev. C. H. Hartshorne, in his excellent paper on the castle in the *Archæological Journal* (Vol. v.) for 1850, quotes sundry other items of a later day for works on the castle, generally of small amount, the only large sums being £12 9s. 1d., £24 5s. 7d., and £43 5s. 4d., in the 4th, 7th, and 13th years of John respectively. Owing to the destruction of all the works within the curtain wall



except the great tower, it is difficult to say upon what these sums were laid out.\*

It only remains for me at the present time to say a brief word

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\* With regard to the historical evidence of this or any other building, it is absolutely necessary to consult original records, and not trust to print. In reading Mr. Hartshorne's paper, I was desirous of knowing the precise text of some of the entries quoted. The only way to do this was to examine the original Pipe Rolls at the Public Record Office. I then found that Mr. Hartshorne had overlooked, among other items of less moment, the very important entry on the Roll for 1176, which records the building of the keep and the cost of the work, facts that we now know for the first time.

or two as to the character of the remains of the Peak fortress now extant, so far as they illustrate the outline history just given. On the top of the hill on which it stands is an irregular area, measuring roughly about 220 feet in length from east to west, and 100 feet and 60 feet in width at the west and east ends respectively. This area is enclosed by a curtain wall of masonry. The wall on the west, crowning the precipice, deserves close attention. At several points its masonry will be seen to be formed of rude courses of herring-bone work.

There can be little doubt that we have here a portion of the castle built by William Peverel shortly after 1068. If this be really the case, Derbyshire may lay claim to possess one of the earliest military works executed in this country after the advent of the Norman William.

On the highest point within the area stands the keep, or great Tower. It is a characteristic late Norman rectangular keep, about 60ft. high, and measuring 21ft. 3½in. by 19ft. 2in. internally, with walls 8ft. thick. It has unfortunately been robbed of much of its ashlar facing, especially on the north and east sides. The basement is much choked up with rubbish.