

## THE SHELL KEEP AT GUILDFORD CASTLE.

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THAT there is a square keep at Guildford, is a matter of notoriety; that there was a shell keep is, I believe, certain; though it has been unrecognised so far.

The history of fortifications in England and Normandy is a long subject, with the outlines of which many readers of these *Collections* are tolerably familiar. But at the risk of repeating well-known facts, I must briefly recapitulate a few of them, to explain why I believe that there is a feature of Guildford Castle which has escaped proper notice so far in the various descriptions which have been written of the place.

The earliest English and Norman fortifications were burhs, that is, artificial mounds of earth, scooped up out of a ditch and piled together in the centre, and then further defended by palisades of wood. They had usually a wooden house on the top. Leicester, Tamworth, Tutbury, Arundel, Windsor and Farnham, are all good remaining examples in England. There are many more, and there are literally a hundred or so in Normandy. Sometimes, as at Lewes, the end or the two ends of a ridge of hill were heightened by earth removed from the centre of the ridge. The mound at Guildford seems to belong to this class. A spur of the chalk down overhanging the river was raised by earth which was removed from the ditch which is still so well marked upon the east side of the keep of the castle, and which partly remains on the north and south. Edward, the son of Alfred, deliberately fortified the midland counties against the Danes by these burhs, and possibly Alfred

began the work in the southern counties. It is not unlikely that the mound at Guildford belongs to the period of the Danish wars, to the days of Alfred or Edward. Exact contemporary pictures of similar burhs of the eleventh century, are to be seen in the part of the Bayeux Tapestry which illustrates the campaign of William and Harold in Brittany. The picture of Dinan is the best example, showing the wooden house on the top of the mound, the wooden palisades round it, which the Norman soldiers are trying to set alight with torches, and the ditch round the bottom. This style of fortification continued to be common long after the Norman conquest of England.

The addition of stone walls to the earthen mound was an afterthought, which was very shortly followed and accompanied indeed by the introduction of a new style of fortification altogether, the raising of solid quadrangular Norman keeps, probably copied from the towers of the Roman Empire in the East, with which the Sicilian and South Italian and Levantine wars of the Normans had made them familiar. The New Castle on Tyne, we may remember, was built under William Rufus by Byzantine engineers. Such solid keeps, however, could not be safely placed on the top of the old artificial mounds, even if the latter were some hundreds of years old; they were too heavy. They invariably stand upon natural ground, except in three cases in England. At Christchurch the keep is built in the middle of a flat-topped low mound, with the weight evenly distributed, and with foundations possibly running down to the natural ground underneath. At Clun in Shropshire and at Guildford the keep is placed on the side of the mound, with one side standing on a natural foundation.<sup>1</sup> In both cases this side is the strongest. At Guildford it is almost twice as thick as

<sup>1</sup> The excavations carried out in 1887 at Guildford by Mr. H. Peak, then borough surveyor, showed that the foundations of the other three sides of Guildford square keep are so deep that they may reach the natural ground too. But I doubt if they do.

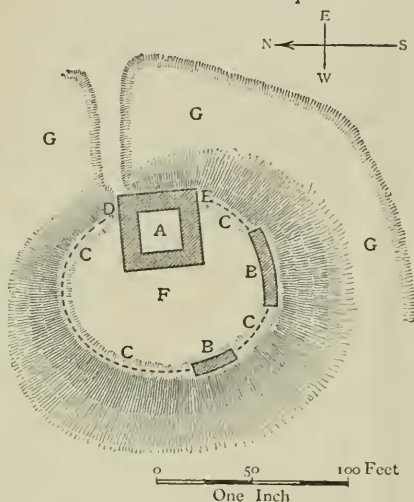
the other sides, and much less intersected by passages or windows. It is intended to hold up the whole structure, and has done so at Guildford. At Clun the side of the keep built farthest up the mound has perished, perhaps from the insecurity of the foundation, though there is no certainty that this is the cause.

But this was not the normal way of improving the fortification of a burh by stonework. The usual plan was to encircle the mound with a shell keep of stone, that is, with a wall built round the mound, near the top or a little way down its sides, with chambers against it inside, and an open space in the middle. The work was not so high nor so heavy as the square keep, it was larger in circuit, and so spread its weight more, and the inner walls, which were not exposed to attack, did not need to be extraordinarily thick. Though the square keep might be thicker on one side than on another, it was a citadel exposed to attack all round, and had to be very strong on every side. All its walls were outside walls.

In this fashion more burhs in England than can be conveniently enumerated were turned into stone castles. Not to go far afield from our special case, Farnham and Arundel are such. I believe that Guildford was another example, before the building of the present square keep. Round the top of the mound, at its edge on the south side, and a little below the top on the west and north (the square keep being to the east of the mound), is an old wall, or marks of the foundations of an old wall. It has been called the wall of an inner ward, of a court that is, to be defended before the last stronghold of the keep was reached. Such a purpose no doubt it would fulfil after the square keep was built, but primarily I believe that it was the keep itself, a shell keep. This wall, from its remains, must have been quite 20 feet high originally, probably more. It is the wall of a building, not merely of a courtyard. In the wall, to the south, are the remains of two or perhaps three *garde robes* with shafts connected together and coming to a vent at the bottom of the wall outside.

These *garde robes* are one above the other, showing more than one storey of building. The sockets for beams remain on the inside of the wall where rooms were built against it. That a building should be deliberately raised here at the same time as the square keep would be unlikely, it would be awkwardly near the keep itself. Mr. Clarke, in his book on *Medieval Military Architecture*, says that this, which he calls the wall of the inner ward, was evidently built at the same time as the square keep, that the building is similar, and that tiles are arranged in the walls in the same way. The two latter statements are simply mistakes. The square keep was faced throughout, except on the northern base, where there was a facing of chalk, with Bargate stone, with some sandstone also. Some of the facing has been plundered where people in want of building stone could reach it. The interior

The Mound at Guildford with the two Keeps.



- A. Square Keep of Bargate Stone
- B. Shell Keep of chalk
- C. Foundations of ditto
- D. Facing of chalk at Base of Keep by entrance
- E. Chalk similar to Shell Keep built into the Square Keep
- F. Mound
- G. Ditch

of the wall is mostly chalk rubble and flints. In some places courses of flints appear outside, and some Bargate stone is in the interior of the wall too. This stone can be quarried at Littleton, a mile or two off, and in many places towards Godalming, four or five miles away. It is not to be had absolutely on the spot at Guildford. The circular wall, on the other hand, is built throughout of roughly-shaped blocks of the harder chalk, no doubt

quarried from the so-called caverns under the outworks of the castle. The only Bargate stone or sandstone in the circular wall are a few isolated bits, some of them repairs inserted in the outside. Where tiles, perhaps Roman tiles, appear in this wall, they are inserted irregularly, not in courses nor in any settled manner, except in one rough course under the vent of the *garde robes*. They do not appear at all in the square keep, except in the facing of the base on the north side. There they are inserted in several even courses between the well-squared blocks of chalk, which in even rows, quite unlike the rude stone-work of the encircling wall, flank the entrance. So far from the square keep and the circular wall being similar, they are entirely different in materials and style, and were therefore not probably built at one time nor by one architect. If we ask which was built first, the ruder material and style of the circular wall, the stone brought from the immediate neighbourhood, and not from quarries of Bargate stone certainly over a mile, perhaps over four miles away, indicate its earlier date. Besides, at the eastern extremity of the south wall of the square keep, the chalk of the circular wall appears to have been incorporated into the wall of the later building. There was not a complete facing of squared chalk along the basement of the south wall of the keep as there was on the north; but at this one place, where the continuation of the circular wall would touch the square keep, the chalk appears, not as a facing but in the wall. Mr. Peak, whom I consulted, kindly placed at my disposal the results of his examination of the keep made in 1887.<sup>1</sup> At the base of the north, west and south walls of the keep, inside, he found a set-off of Bargate stone from two feet to eighteen inches wide. There is no set-off on the inside of the east wall, but outside there is a rough set-off, not continuous, of chalk, like that of the encircling wall. I

<sup>1</sup> The substance of his discoveries appears in a letter to the *Surrey Advertiser* of May 31st, 1887. He exploded the fictions of an old door on the south side of the keep and of a subterranean dungeon.



have little doubt that it is originally part of that encircling wall, which we can see incorporated into the keep near the south-east angle, and that the east wall of the square keep was raised over the curving line of the lower part of the shell keep, which here stood some way down the mound. How the upper part of the circular wall, whether shell keep or not, was connected with the square keep does not appear. It may have been pulled down, and so disconnected. A very narrow opening between them, flanked by a high wall on each side, and terminating with a drop of 12 or 15 feet on to the slope of the ditch, might have been secured easily enough by a grate, or left deliberately as a sally port. On the north side of the square keep the circular wall was disconnected from it to form the main entrance, approached by a causeway across the ditch. Here the base of the north wall was faced, as we have described, with well-shaped chalk and tiles. There is no sign on this side of the continuation of the circular wall up to the present keep, but the gateway through it was probably always in this place, the spring of the gateway arch is still visible, and the foundation of the encircling wall may be there underneath the square keep. It is visible not many yards from it. Briefly, therefore, I think there is strong reason to believe that a shell keep crowned the Guildford mound from early Norman times, before the square keep was so daringly placed upon its eastern slope about the time of Henry II. That the square keep stands on a foundation of "Saxon" fortifications of the same kind is a mere fancy. No one in England or Normandy built square keeps till about the time of the Norman Conquest of England, no one in England till after it, nor many before the first Crusade; any stone foundations under the square keep can only be those of a shell keep. Perhaps when the square keep was built the inner walls and chambers of the shell keep may have been removed, or partly removed, and it may have been so converted into a mere courtyard wall.

One of the other mounds with a square keep on it is at Clun, in Shropshire, as mentioned above. The Rev.

W. G. Clark-Maxwell has kindly made an examination of Clun Castle for me. But it does not appear that the wall there which encircled the top of the mound is of a different date from the square keep which stands upon the side of the mound. They are of similar material and construction. The foundations of the square keep there very probably reach the natural ground on every side.

A comparison of Guildford with Arundel, however, is instructive. The two mounds are of very similar dimensions; Guildford is about 90 feet across the top and about 200 feet at the base; Arundel about 90 and 230 feet respectively. Arundel is higher, rising 70 feet from the ditch on the north side and 50 feet on the south. Guildford rises 30 feet from the bottom of the ditch, as it now is, on the east, 50 feet from the ground on the west. The ditch was probably deeper once. The out-works of the two castles contained about the same amount of ground; Arundel  $5\frac{1}{2}$  acres, Guildford 6 acres.

The existing shell keep at Arundel is about 20 feet high, that at Guildford was 20 feet or more. The constructions were very much alike, but the face of Arundel keep, which was of chalk, has been covered with Caen stone, brought easily by sea.

The higher mound at Arundel was never subjected to the experiment of a square keep being even partly based upon it, but a tower was added on the side of the mound, where a curtain wall joins the shell keep. It was left for the builders of Guildford, and perhaps Clun, to try the daring innovation of covering the entrance to the shell keep by a square keep, which assumed such proportions as to supersede the original keep altogether as the kernel of the fortress. Arundel shell keep was probably the work of Earl Roger de Montgomery, the contemporary of the Conqueror; the shell keep in the royal manor of Guildford may be of the same reign, or of the time of one of the Conqueror's sons. The castle is first mentioned in 1202, as a prison. That, no doubt, was the square keep, which continued to be the county gaol for some centuries.