

KENILWORTH CASTLE SINCE 1962 (PL. XXXIV, A-C)

At a large monument in the care of the Ministry of Public Building and Works like Kenilworth Castle (Warws.) the amount of activity that goes on and impinges in one way or another on it is very little known to those outside the Ministry. Events of this kind usually pass unrecorded but they have in this instance thrown so much light on the castle's history that they are worth recalling.

In 1962 the carpenters were at work on the earl of Leicester's gatehouse at the N. end of the castle. The top floor is now used by the Kenilworth Urban District Council (the freeholders of the castle), and until recently the ground floor has been used by the Kenilworth Historical Society. It has since been discovered that the ends of the ties supporting the first and second floors have rotted and extensive repairs have been required. In 1962 the masons were at work on the outer curtain and had completed the Swan tower and Lunn's tower when the change came that transferred interest to the S. end of the castle.

During summer week-ends the parking space at the N. end of the castle was quite inadequate to cope with visitors' cars and buses. After much discussion and a trial during a *son-et-lumière* at the castle, it was decided to create a new car-park in the earth-work enclosure known as the Brays at the S. end (*Med. Archaeol.*, ix (1965), fig. 30). The adjustments necessary at the forced entry on its E. side led to the discovery of a massive masonry structure that marks the sharp change in level in the moat of the Brays, and which I have therefore interpreted as a dam with central sluice. The vehicular access is sandwiched between this dam on one side and one of those curious earthen projections, that are such a feature of the Brays bank, on the other; this prompted another (perhaps rash) thought. The narrow causeway that links Brays to castle proper (the barrage to form the mere) was called the tiltyard on Dugdale's plan. It is indeed eminently suited for bouts of individual jousting or tilting, but it is far too constricted for the tourney or mass contest,⁴⁸ such as is recorded in the 13th century at the castle; it might be therefore that the Brays enclosure was added partly as a tournament ground, its earthen projections serving as emplacements for tents and pavilions. At all events its military character leaves many questions open.

At first visitors to the castle walked along the modern road beside the causeway, but the recommendation of the Presentation Committee that the original causeway be restored provided funds much sooner than was expected for filling in the Hawkesworth gap in the causeway, made as part of the Parliamentary slighting in 1649, and also for bridging the void between its S. end and the Brays. The new single-span concrete bridge makes no attempt to imitate its medieval wooden predecessor and perhaps for this reason is quite successful (PL. xxxiv, c). Preliminary work before the bridge was erected revealed the surviving masonry of an elaborate structure for controlling the level of the mere (*Med. Archaeol.*, ix (1965), pl. xvii, a-b). It was this discovery that led me to suggest that an original smaller mere (referred to in the charter to the priory) had been enlarged by the construction of these works in the early 13th century (*ibid.*, p. 156). The edge of the new mere (surface at 261.5 O.D.) would have determined the line of the outer curtain on the west and this might have explained why P. A. Rahtz found a ditch behind it filled at this time when another ditch was dug farther in around the inner bailey.⁴⁹ While the rather complicated operation of laying the pipes to carry the stream was taking place, it was possible to scrape back the S. face of the Hawkesworth gap to produce a rough section (*Med. Archaeol.*, ix (1965), pl. xix). A very marked change takes place 12 ft. below the present surface, the darker loamy gravel perhaps constituting the lower causeway associated with a smaller mere.

The suggestive evidence of the earthen section has received striking confirmation in masonry from the southern end of the causeway, where a good deal of the history has

⁴⁸ For the evolution of tournaments see S. Painter, *French Chivalry* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1965), pp. 44-53.

⁴⁹ I had the privilege of discussing this on the ground with Mr. Rahtz, who has recently published a detailed account in *Trans. Birmingham Archaeol. Soc.*, LXXXI (1966), 55-73.

been revealed of that structure, which has been known, since its reconstruction by the earl of Leicester, as the Gallery tower. The earl raised the height of the causeway along its length by about 3 ft. 'Tower' is a misnomer for what was akin to a gatehouse or barbican and was certainly not roofed. Its N. side is formed by the 12th-century wall that terminated the first causeway. This had been built on the solid rock and is L-shaped with a return to the north on its E. side, which bears a pilaster buttress. There are the foundations of a central gateway. It projected beyond the high ground on the west, but as there is no northward return presumably the mere itself served as a defence. In the 13th century a return wall was built against it at the NW. corner and the void behind filled in with soil. The E. wall was evidently rebuilt and so produced the crenellated causeway that is depicted in Hollar's views. Meanwhile an irregular wall (following the shape of the high ground) was built on to the SE. corner and ran south-eastwards to the massive masonry of the water gate. At the W. side the new wall was joined on to the old at right angles a few feet back from its end and then ran south to terminate in a D-shaped tower facing westwards towards the mere (PL. xxxiv, A). The bay thus formed is shown on the plan and in Hollar's view in Dugdale's *Antiquities of Warwickshire*. The southern half of the tower has been destroyed and practically all the wall along the south overlooking the water controls has disappeared; a small patch of revetment below the bridge shows its position at the rear of the tower (PL. xxxiv, c). Although there is no matching tower on the other side of the bridge, the arrangement strongly recalls the Constable's tower at Dover Castle erected by Hubert de Burgh in 1220-7 (*History of the King's Works*, I, fig. 19; II, pp. 634-6; loose plan 1) with which no doubt it is roughly contemporary.

Before work could be resumed by the masons on the water tower and the curtain proper, the gatehouse, known as Mortimer's tower, through which visitors had to pass required treatment. This building again shows two phases, an earlier 12th-century gateway and an uncompromising 13th-century gatehouse built in front, recalling the sequence we have seen at the other end of the causeway although on a grander scale of course. An interesting discovery at this point is evidence of cobbling from a late period of use of the causeway, presumably when the Hawkesworth gap was bridged after the conversion of Leicester's gatehouse into a house and before the construction of a later N. entry beside it.

The plan of Kenilworth Castle in Dugdale's *Antiquities* is too distorted for its features to be transposed on to a modern plan of the castle, although it is of course an indispensable source for the medieval buildings. North of the keep it shows a large formal garden on the site of the present orchard of aged trees and, beyond, the line of the N. curtain with two turrets between the Swan tower and Leicester's gatehouse. The entire length of the N. curtain has since been destroyed and replaced by a garden wall farther out. Excavation has shown that its base exists for about 30 yd. east of the Swan tower but that it has been robbed from about the first turret until after the slight turn south-eastwards to the next turret (polygonal in Dugdale) which, as we now know, survives. It is rectangular on the inside and built slightly askew to the curtain. However, what the plan does not show is that this turret had been a postern, entered through a doorway with rebate and drawbar hole on the castle side (PL. xxxiv, B). This faced a narrow blocked doorway with the site of a bridge on its outside (still buried in the garden). The medieval N. postern for pedestrians had evidently been blocked when the earl of Leicester built his gatehouse for vehicular traffic in Elizabethan times.

Since Rahtz started excavating in 1960 the decade has yielded a surprising amount of information about the castle. This information, it is true, has been about its periphery, but is not less significant for that reason. If we recall that in his foundation charter to the priory Geoffrey de Clinton reserved land required for his castle and in a slightly later charter allowed the canons to fish 'with boats and nets' on Thursdays in his pool (presumably the mere), it is likely that the original siting of the castle was made with an eye to damming the stream. Later, the castle itself was altered to fit the shape of the mere,

which became its main westerly defence. King Henry V's pleasance (*Med. Archaeol.*, VIII (1966), 222-3) and the earl of Leicester's aquatic entertainments for Queen Elizabeth are reminders of its later importance for pleasure; it is indeed only through Hollar's views that one can restore to the present forlorn ruins one of the formative features of the castle's history.

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MEDIEVAL TIMBERWORK AT BISHAM ABBEY (FIGS. 64-6)

The mansion known as Bisham Abbey lies on the Berkshire side of the Thames, close to Marlow (SU 846849). An account, with plan, in the *Victoria County History*⁵⁰ and illustrated descriptions by E. T. Long⁵¹ say little about the medieval timberwork, much of which survives from the first two phases (plan of these phases only, FIG. 64), i.e. the 13th-century manor house erected by the Knights Templar, and the great chamber added by the earl of Salisbury in the 14th century.

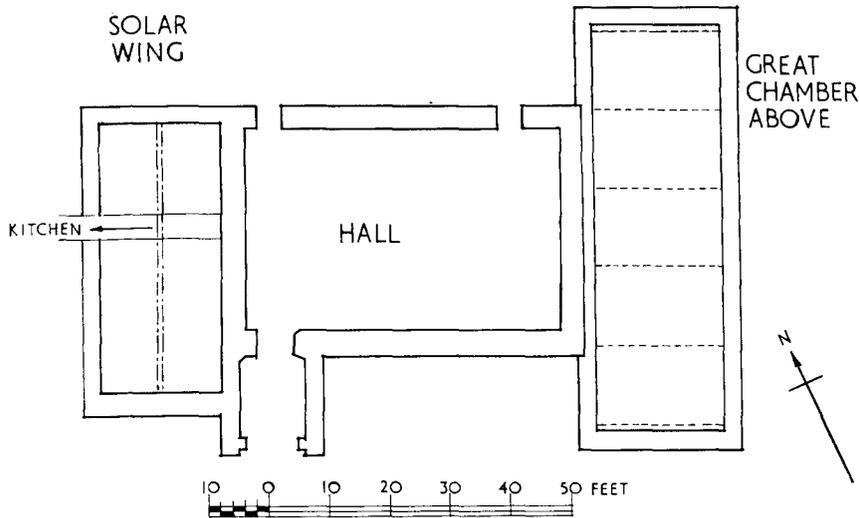


FIG. 64

BISHAM ABBEY, BERKSHIRE

Plan of Templars' hall and solar (c. 1260) and of great chamber (c. 1340) (pp. 220 ff.),

TEMPLARS' HALL AND SOLAR

Hall. The stone-built, ground-floor hall is probably the widest *unaisled* hall that has survived from before 1300.⁵² Including the cross-passage at the W. end, its internal dimensions are 52 by 33½ ft. The work has been attributed⁵⁰ to c. 1280 from the mouldings on the famous porch, the entrance-door and the window in the south gable, but in the present state of knowledge a date nearer 1260 seems more likely for these features.

The Templars spanned the hall with a roof of rafters, light collars and scissor-braces. This type⁵³ had appeared in England by the 1st quarter of the 13th century (it was used over the W. front of Peterborough Cathedral) and by the middle of the

⁵⁰ *V.C.H., Berks.*, III (1923), 139.

⁵¹ *Berks. Archaeol. J.*, XLIV (1940), 101-13, and *Country Life*, April 12, 19 and 26, 1941, pp. 320-4, 342-6 and 364-8.

⁵² M. E. Wood, *The English Medieval House* (London, 1965), table on p. 62.

⁵³ J. M. Fletcher and P. S. Spokes, *Med. Archaeol.*, VIII (1964), 152-83.