

RICHARD'S CASTLE.

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THE site of Richard's Castle, a well-known and very ancient fortress in the county of Hereford, but near to Ludlow and the borders of Shropshire, is distinguished by one of those remarkable works in earth which have hitherto, in topographical books, passed undescribed, or described only in such general terms as afford no clue to any sound inference as to the people or the period by whom or at which they were thrown up. And yet if there were correct plans and precise descriptions of the earthworks of this country, it is probable that some sound general conclusions as to their origin would be arrived at. Many, probably most, are regarded as *præ-historic*, but still something of their history may, it is probable, be established by a careful consideration of the evidence which they themselves afford.

The earthworks of which Richard's Castle affords a good example, and Wigmore, its neighbour, one still more remarkable, belong to a class entirely distinct both in position and form from all other military or domestic earthworks found in any part of Britain. They are not placed upon lofty hill tops, inaccessible, or nearly so, to any form of wheel carriage, far from cultivated land, of a figure determined by the character of the ground, or of an area usually broad enough to include a large number of persons; neither are they to be confounded with those single circles or half circles of ditch and bank, without any central elevation, which are occasionally found, the latter especially, on promontories near the sea; still less do they resemble the rectangular works of the Romans, which, though sometimes of large area, are rarely contained within earthworks of that enormous size which is a character of the defences both of those who preceded and of those who followed them in this island.

The earthworks now under description are usually dis-

tinguished by the presence of a lofty and conical mound, table-topped, and girt with defensive works more or less concentric. These mounds are distinguished from sepulchral barrows, such as Silbury, and motes or judicial eminences, such as Hawick, in the former case by the flat top, and in both by the exterior defences. Occasionally, as in Old Sarum and Badbury, the mound is central, and the area large enough to contain a moderate army, but more commonly the area is small, and the mound, though within the circle, is placed near its edge, or else, as at Berkhamstead and Tonbridge, it is actually on the line, and forms a part of the *enceinte*. Sometimes, where an earlier work has been taken possession of and a mound been thrown up, as at Cardiff, Wareham, Wallingford, Tamworth, and Leicester, the mound is placed in one corner or near one side, and has its own proper ditch, leaving the exterior works unaltered. .

It would be too much to say that in no other class of earthworks than these is the mound employed, or that no other people than their constructors made use of that form; but it may safely be laid down that in no other class of early fortifications did the mound exist as the leading and typical feature. In Roman and Norman, as in later works of defence, the mound was no doubt sometimes seen, but it was a subordinate feature, placed on one angle of the rampart, or, as at Kenilworth, on an elevated bastion, or as what, in later works, is known as a "cavalier." Also in decided and evidently early British works the mound is sometimes placed in the end of an entrance, so as to divide the way, and place those who approach at a disadvantage; but such mounds are not likely to be confounded with those here described.

It is of course possible that mounds such as that at Arundel or Shrewsbury may be older than the surrounding works; may have been, for example, sepulchral, and altered and converted to military or domestic purposes; but this is scarcely probable, and could not have been a general custom. Sepulchral barrows are not often placed where a defensive work is needed, and most early nations are superstitious and would avoid dwelling over a grave, especially if it contained the slain of an army. Silbury would no doubt make as good a keep as Marlborough, but it has not been so used. The Tynwald in Man indeed has lately been proved to be

sepulchral in origin, but this is the only case known, and the mound is used for judicial purposes, not as a residence.

The type of earthwork here under consideration is composed of a conical flat-topped mound, usually artificial, 20 to 60 ft. high, and 30 to 40 ft. in diameter at the summit, surrounded by a ditch. From this ditch, and extending round it as a large hoop may contain on its inner face a smaller one, springs a second ditch, enclosing an area larger than that occupied by the mound, placed on one side of it, and covering about four-fifths of its circumference, the two ditches coinciding for the other fifth. Where there was a natural steep, as at Wigmore or Builth, the mound was placed on its edge, and thus the single defence was on that side sufficient. No doubt the main reason for placing the mound, as at Warwick, at one side of the *enceinte*, was to allow of the concentration of the offices, agricultural buildings, and barracks on one spot, instead of placing them in a scattered annular space all round the citadel. Works answering generally to this description are common in Normandy, all over England, especially in Yorkshire, along the Severn, and upon the borders and more accessible parts of South and Mid Wales. They are rare in Scotland and Ireland, and unusual in France, out of Normandy. They seem intended for the protection of a family and estate, and are usually placed in the midst of lands suitable for agriculture, and were evidently occupied by a people who cultivated the soil, and did not depend upon hunting for a subsistence.

Moreover, many of these works have English or Teutonic, not Celtic names, and are seldom, unless when on the site of an older work, distinguished by the prefix of "caer," or the suffix of "cester,"—the former commonly denoting British, the latter Roman, occupation. Those who wish to have a clear idea of the great strength of a mound surrounded, as originally planned, by its proper ditch, should see that of Cardiff, where the judicious excavations of Lord Bute have laid open the ancient ditch, adding thus vastly to the grandeur of the cone of earth, and showing how secure must have been a residence upon its summit. Here, too, the lowest piles and struts of the original timber bridge have been laid open.

In the Saxon Chronicle are mentioned a considerable

number of "burghs," or fortresses, the date of which is often mentioned, and the rapidity of the construction of which shows that they could not have been, to any extent, in the first instance at least, works in masonry. Those therein mentioned are Bedford, Bamborough, Buttington, Bridgenorth, Badbury, Buckingham, Bakewell, Carisbrook, Chester, Chirbury, Colchester, Cledemather, Durham, Eddesbury, Exeter, Hertford, Huntingdon, Jedburgh, Leicester, Lincoln, Maldon, Milton, Nottingham, Norwich, Pevensey, Quatford, Rochester, Runcorn, Scergeat or Garratt, Sherborne, Stafford, Stamford, Tamworth, Taunton, Tempsford, Tonbridge, Towcester, Wardbury, Wareham, Warwick, Wigmore, Witham, and York.

Of these some are Roman adapted works, others have been removed, others have not been sought after, but several remain and present the mound as the principal feature. In some places two mounds were thrown up, one on either side of a river, as at Buckingham, Stamford, Nottingham, Hertford, and York, where they still remain. A wall, probably the Roman one, is mentioned at Colchester; and at Towcester, it is said that King Edward sat down with his forces while they encompassed the burgh with a stone wall. This, therefore, must have been quickly done, and was probably of dry stone. Of the fortresses with mounds the earliest mentioned are Carisbrook, in A.D. 530, and Bedford, in 571; the others occur mostly in the ninth and very early in the tenth centuries. Those mentioned in the Saxon Chronicle are, of course, but a very few of the burghs erected in England, but the notices are valuable, especially because in some well-marked instances, as Warwick and Leicester, the actual date of construction is given.

The original policy of the Conqueror was, as far as possible, to establish his rule quietly, and to come in as the heir to the throne. With this view, when the opposition of the English chiefs led him to root them out, he usually placed the Norman successor on the English seat. Thus nearly all these burghs or mounds having been the seat or *aula* of a Saxon lord, the change to the common people was not necessarily violent, though it often became so. The tenants dwelt round and paid duty and service at the accustomed spot; no alteration was made in the parochial unit, sokes and hundreds and other territorial divisions remained, with their courts,

unchanged; and though land ceased to be allodial, and military service was sharply exacted, it may be supposed that Godwin and Harold and the great English lords had not scrupled to make their tenants follow them to the war, not as mercenaries, but more or less at their, the tenants, own charge.

Hence, although the Conqueror occasionally ordered a castle, like the Tower, to be built on an entirely new place, more commonly, and especially with the mesne lords, the castle was nothing more than the old English residence, with its defences replaced by walls and towers, no doubt of formidable height and strength. The Norman made ample use of timber for military purposes, but it was rather for barriers and outworks and the light defences, than for the main walls of his stronghold, or for its towers or keep. Inside these, however, it was also largely used. The early floors were almost invariably, like the roofs, of wood, and the dwellings of the dependents long continued to be mere huts of timber, sheds built against the walls, always getting out of order, and a continual source of expense to the lord, or, as we see in the records of the royal castles, to the Sheriff of the county.

Where the site was new, as in London or at Newcastle, or where there was no mound, as at Corfe or Ludlow, Bristol, Carlisle, or Brougham, or Ogmore or Penlline, a rectangular keep was, as a matter of course, constructed; but where there was a mound, as at Arundel, Trematon, Warwick, York, Cardiff, Caerleon, Worcester, Builth or Ewias-Harold, Kilpeck or Lincoln, the keep became a circular or polygonal shell, or in some later cases, as Warwick and York, a tower of a quatre-foil pattern, thus preserving, but elevating, the older English type.

The rectangular form of keep, being more durable and more striking to the view than the shell keep, has become the received representative of a Norman castle; but it is probable that at the least one-half of the castles erected between 1066 and 1200 were of the other type. The mounds which, for a century or two after their erection, would not have carried in safety any heavy masonry, became firmly consolidated, and as the form of structure placed upon them was judiciously designed, any serious settlement is rare.

There are but two instances at present known in which

the mound and the rectangular keep are found in the same group, and in these two cases they are actually combined. They are Christchurch, where the mound is small, and the keep is probably founded, through it, upon the solid ; and Guildford, where the mound is large, but the keep is built upon its edge or slope, and there also rests upon the virgin soil. At Oxford, the remaining square tower, though Norman, was on the wall, and was not the keep. This was a shell, and crowned the large mound, which still contains a part of its subterranean works.

Richard's Castle, which has given rise to these remarks, is a most interesting remain. It is one of a series of works common on the Welsh border and the Middle Marshes. Such were Hereford and Worcester, in modern times despoiled of their mounds : Shrewsbury, still towering above the deep and rapid Severn : Tre-Faldwin or Montgomery, a single instance of a town and county bearing the name of the invader : Kilpeck and Ewias-Harold, described in recent numbers of the " Builder : " Builth, the extreme limit westward held for any time by the English : Cardiff, Caerleon, Wigmore, and Richard's Castle, which last it is the object of the present memoir to describe.

It is unfortunate for both writer and reader that there exists no correct, indeed it may be said no plan of numbers of this most interesting class of our natural antiquities. The Ordnance surveyors, who have executed so creditable a map of the whole country on a small scale, might easily have been instructed to complete all earthworks of peculiar interest upon a scale sufficient to exhibit their details and to render intelligible any scientific descriptions of them. How well this might have been effected is proved by the surveys of the castles of York, Guildford, and the remains of that of Southampton, as included in the large scale survey of those towns.

Richard's Castle, fortress and parish, takes name from a certain Richard fitz-Scrob, one of the Normans attached to the court of the Confessor, and who was quartered by that prince upon probably the most exposed district upon the Welsh frontier ; a position commanding some of the richest and most regretted of the lands conquered by the English, and sure to be assailed frequently and in force.

What invader of the 10th century originally threw

up the magnificent earthwork, which must have guided Fitz-Scrob in his choice of a residence is not known, but from its summit is comprehended one of the noblest and most extensive prospects to be found even in a quarter of England so rich in the most pleasing combination of wood and water, lofty hills and broad and fertile dales. As the new settler traversed the meads of the Severn, and left behind him the grassy meadows of the Team and the Lugg, and rode up the rising ground to the point where his own or his son's devotion afterwards established a church, he must have blessed the fate that placed him amidst a country so rich, and in the possession of which the vast earthwork immediately before him would be an assurance of more than ordinary security.

The advent of Fitz-Scrob was viewed with profound dislike from opposite quarters. In those days, on the very eve of the coming in of William, Gruffydd, the Welsh Prince, must have known how formidable a neighbour was a Norman knight; and the English, who were aware what engines of local tyranny were the Norman castles, regarded with dismay the lofty walls and towers, which made impregnable a place already strong, and converted a well-known burgh into a castle such as they had heard of with dread but had not before seen.

What were the precise works constructed by Richard it is difficult to say. That he converted the mound into his keep, and girt the annexed ward with a wall is possible, though the masonry, of which vast fragments still remain, is apparently of rather a later date. There is no reason to suppose that he built a rectangular keep. There was already a mound. His keep would be on its summit, and if masonry were employed in its construction, it must have been a shell or low tower at most, of 30 or 35 ft. diameter, such as is seen on the mound of Cardiff.

The first danger to the new lord came from Earl Godwin and his sons, who represented the English, and therefore the anti-Norman feeling. One of the avowed grievances for the redress of which they met in arms at Beverston, in 1052, was the presence of Richard fitz-Scrob upon English soil. That they failed, and that their failure led to the temporary exile of Earl Godwin is a matter of history. Richard remained unmolested, and doubtless employed himself in adding to his castle that strength which it could scarcely have in excess.

It is not stated that he shared in the campaign and ignominious defeat of Earl Ralf the Timid against Prince Gruffydd, but probably he did so.

In 1056, Harold, then Earl of the West Saxons, entered the Marches against the Welsh, and advanced into Archerfield, where his probable godson, Harold, the son of Ralph, held the Castle of Ewias-Harold, the earthworks of which were constructed on the type of those of Richard's Castle, and which, a few years later, was to receive additions in masonry after the same pattern. Whether Richard was in alliance with Earl Harold or Harold of Ewias is not known, but the position of his castle would scarcely allow him to be neuter.

In 1062, Gruffydd was again over the Herefordshire border, and Harold, then holding the Earldom of Hereford, was again at his post, and the Lord of Ewias joined him. This was followed by the larger expedition, in which Harold invaded Wales by sea from Bristol, conjointly with his brother Tostig from Northumberland. They met at Rhuddlan, and soon after the Welsh Prince was massacred by his own people. During these turbulent years the whole border must have been in constant turmoil, and we may fairly suppose that Richard, to whom both parties were in substance opposed, must have fortified his castle by every means then in use.

The arrival of the Conqueror relieved Richard from his most formidable foe, the English people directed by an English leader. He and his son Osbert shared in the ascendancy of their race, and received from William large grants in Herefordshire and elsewhere, which are duly recorded in Domesday.

The castle of Richard's Castle occupies a position equally remarkable for beauty and for strength. It stands upon the eastern slope of the Vinnall Hill, an elevated ridge which extends hither from Ludlow, and a little to the west of the castle is cleft by two deep parallel gorges, beyond which the high ground reappears in two diverging ridges, of which one extends westward in the direction of Wigmore and the other more southerly to the river Lugg, at Mortimer's Cross, having on its ridge the ancient British earthwork of Croft Ambrey, and below it the fortress of Croft Castle, reported to occupy an early English site. By this means, Richard's Castle is protected from the Welsh side by a double

defence of hill and valley, besides its more immediate and special works.

The castle, though far below the summit of the Vinnall, stands upon very high ground, sloping rapidly towards the east. An exceedingly deep and wide gorge descending from the west bounds the position on the south, while a smaller and tributary valley descending from the north, falls into the greater valley below the castle, and thus completes its strength upon the north, west, and south points. The defence towards the east is wholly artificial.

Upon the point of the high land, above the meeting of the two valleys, a large and lofty mound has been piled up, the base of which is about 300 ft. above the valley, and the summit 60 ft. higher, that being its proper height. It is about 30 ft. in diameter at the top, and the sides are very steep. It seems wholly artificial, and stands in its own very deep ditch, beyond which is a high bank. On the west side this ditch is succeeded by the steep natural slope descending to the river, but towards the east the ditch seems to have been reinforced by a second, which encloses a larger area, more or less semi-lunar in shape, and which has a bank within and upon the scarp of the outer ditch, which is here artificial, and cuts off the fortress from the adjacent high ground now occupied as the churchyard.

These were the defences of the original fortress, and as was almost invariably the case when the Normans converted such an earthwork into a castle, a round tower or shell was constructed upon the summit of the mound, constituting the keep. From this, on the north-east and south-west sides, a strong and lofty curtain wall descended the slope, and on reaching the edge of the ditch was bent eastward, and curved round so as to include the whole entrenched area south-east of the mound, and half the mound itself, of which the other or western half, strong in its great natural strength, augmented by its ditch, was left without any exterior or second line of defence in masonry. The domestic buildings stood in this base court or lower ward, the keep only being occupied during a siege, or under exceptional circumstances. The entrance was by an arch in the curtain on the south side. Thus, as at Shrewsbury, Berkhamstead, and Tamworth, and indeed *very generally*, the mound and keep stood on the general *enceinte* of the fortress, forming a part of its outer

defence. The lower ward was accessible to wheeled carriages, but the keep could only be ascended by steps. At this time the summit of the mound is covered with *debris* and rubbish, upon which young timber trees and underwood have made vigorous growth, and the enclosure, naturally inaccessible, is strictly preserved. The curtain descending the slope on the north-east is tolerably perfect, as is the adjacent part along the north-west front of the lower ward. Farther on the wall seems to have been lifted with gunpowder, and a vast fragment lies in the ditch. Beyond this the foundations here and there appear ; the wall itself remains skirting the scarp of the ditch along the east and south fronts, and towards the latter side is the place where the arch of entrance pierced the wall, as shown by the gap in the masonry and the passage through the bank. Just beyond this the curtain ascends the mound and abutted on the keep tower, completing the circle of the defences in masonry.

From the density and offensive character of the vegetation it is difficult either to get a good general view of the place or to follow its details, but the fragments of masonry lie about generally, and if cleared and the thin upper soil removed no doubt a correct plan of this most interesting place could be obtained, and the date of the masonry ascertained with some degree of certainty. The masonry above ground is probably Norman, but all the ashlar has disappeared. The great interest of the place is due to its very remarkable earthworks, and to the fact that it was occupied and fortified by a Norman master before the Conquest.

The adjacent church is a large and rather fine building in the Decorated style. It stands but a very few yards outside the castle ditch, up to which its burial ground extends. It is remarkable in having a large square belfry tower, detached, and placed a few yards south-east of the chancel.