

## PICKERING CASTLE.

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THE castle and town of Pickering stand upon the southern edge of the moors of north-eastern Yorkshire, where the upland subsides into a broad tract of meadow, which, under the names of Carr, Ing, Marisch, and Bottom, extends southwards nearly to Malton, and east and west from near Scarborough to a little short of Helmsley. This is the district known as the Lythe or Vale of Pickering, a designation which shows the early and wide-spread importance of the castle, the chief seat of so considerable a district.

One of the principal passes into the Lythe from the north is that now occupied by the Malton and Whitby Railway, and down which flows the Pickering Beck, a tributary (through the Costa Beck) of the Rye and the Derwent. The pass is rather a ravine than a valley, and is deep, rocky, narrow, and winding. The castle occupies a rocky knoll near where the pass opens out into the plain, and stands a few yards east of, and 100 ft. or more above, the stream, on either bank of which is built the town, below and under the immediate protection of the castle.

The position is a rocky headland, about 70 or 80 ft. above the town, and jutting out sharply towards the north and west into the valley. Thus two sides, covering nearly half the area, are naturally strong. Towards the south and west the ground rises gently, attaining to the height of 200 and even 300 ft., at distances of from a quarter of a mile to two miles. On these sides, therefore, the defence is artificial, and composed of a deep and broad ditch, which opens out upon the valley at each of its ends. It is quite dry, and from its position and level was probably always so : a part of it indeed carried the way up to the postern.

The area thus defended falls somewhat towards the west. It is pear-shaped, the stalk being towards the south-west. Its

cross dimensions are about 500 ft. by 350 ft. It is contained within a curtain wall of considerable height and strength towards the town front, and having upon its southern half four towers. Upon the northern half were formerly two, both of which have disappeared. The Keep and the inner gatehouse belong to both divisions, being upon the line common to both. Within the general area, and rather near to its north-eastern or larger end, is a conical flat-topped mound, wholly artificial, and surrounded by a circular ditch, of which a part towards the east is quarried out of the rock. Upon this mound stood the Keep, and from it, on nearly opposite sides, sprung the cross curtain which traversed the area in almost its greatest diameter, and, with the Keep, divided it into two nearly equal wards, to the north and the south. On the outer or the southern front of this wall is a deep and wide ditch, which extends from the ditch of the mound each way towards the *enceinte*, the eastern limb opening into the outer ditch, and the western upon the face of the low cliff. Each of these openings is, however, traversed by the main curtain. Upon the southern and longer limb of the cross curtain is the inner gateway, leading from one ward to the other, and opposite to the outer gate, which is on the southern front.

The four mural towers already mentioned are all in the southern ward. They are, Mill Tower, Rosamond's, the Devil's Tower, and the Gate Tower. Devil's Tower contains a postern. Besides the Keep, Leland mentions three towers in the north ward. Of these the inner gate was one, and the other two probably capped the two angles of that ward. The domestic buildings in Leland's time were of timber, and are gone. There remains a chapel, desecrated, and of which the existing building is of very doubtful date.

The MOUND is 76 ft. diameter at the flat top, about 70 ft. high, and at its base in the bottom of the surrounding ditch about 220 ft. diameter.

The KEEP, which is placed upon its summit, was a shell of masonry, 6 ft. to 7 ft. thick ; within it is circular ; and outside, in part at least, polygonal ; and was perhaps originally a nonagon, with sides of 24 ft. Of this shell there remain two fragments, on nearly opposite sides of the area, one 35 ft. long, and containing two loops, the other 24 ft., and containing a loop and a half. These are at the ground level. They are

6 ft. high and of 3 in. opening, dovetailed at the lower end, and having a short cross member. Each is placed in a round-headed recess of 6 ft. opening and splayed. The fragments are about 18 ft. high, and may have been 20 ft. to the rampart walk. Outside, the wall rises from a low plain plinth. The wall is of rude roughly coursed rubble, with ashlar dressings and quoins at the two angles that remain. There is a ledge or walk of about 2 ft. broad outside the wall.

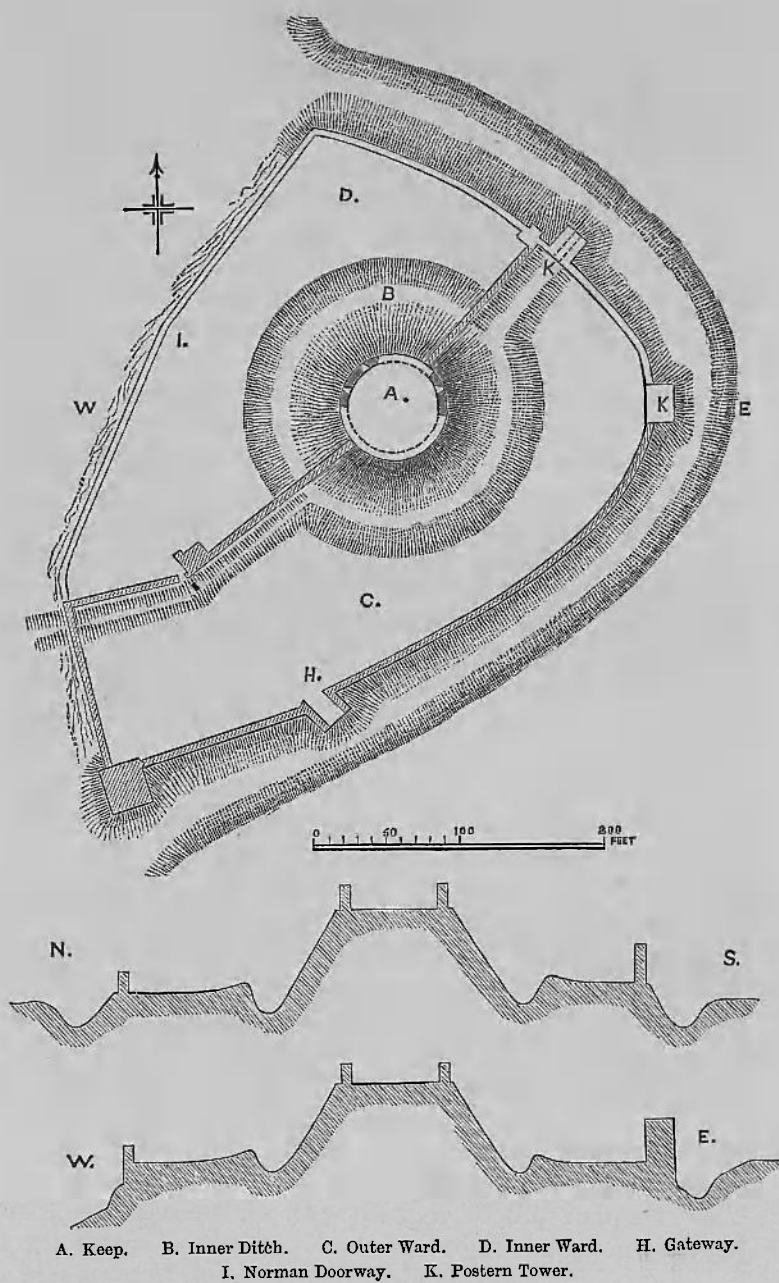
From opposite sides of the mound spring the cross curtains, at a very obtuse angle, so that a trifle more of the base of the mound belongs to the south than to the north ward. These curtains are 7 ft. thick, and are built upon the slope and across the ditch of the mound, being at the deepest about 70 ft. high. At present they cease at the top edge of the mound, and do not seem to have been any higher, save by a parapet, or to have abutted against the Keep. This is what appears at Tickhill and Tamworth, and perhaps was the case at Berkhamstead. No doubt the parapet was continued against the Keep wall, and there may have been a postern, as at Hawarden, where, however, the wall itself abuts upon the Keep. The eastern limb is tolerably perfect as far as the counterscarp of the ditch. It is then broken down for some feet, but finally is seen to have abutted upon the outer curtain, close to the Devil's Tower. The other, or western limb, extends to the inner gate tower. Towards the junction the curtain is somewhat thickened and very lofty. Here a straight flight of steps ascends from the rampart walk to a second rampart higher up, so that there are two rows of loops, the upper being in the battlement. Possibly there was a wooden gallery here to give breadth to the upper rampart.

The GATE TOWER at which the curtain ends was not a gatehouse, but a tower, as at Cardiff, by the side of the gateway, but having no communication with it. This tower is 21 ft. broad by 16 ft. deep, and had a basement and two stories. The gateway, of which it formed the eastern side, was probably a mere opening in the curtain. The further side is gone, but the tower side shows no marks of vaulting or portcullis, and has but one rebate for the doors. Here was a drawbridge of 6 ft. span, of which the counter-pier remains. From the gateway the cross curtain was continued until it abutted on the west curtain. All this part is gone,

or nearly so. In front of the cross curtain is a ditch, crossed by the outer curtain at each end, and running into the ditch of the mound, as has already been mentioned. It is from this ditch that opens internally the postern of the Devil's Tower. This cross curtain is of rough masonry, and at the least its lower part may very well be Norman work.

Of the towers in the outer ward the first to be noted is the MILL TOWER. This caps the S.W. angle of the castle. It is 31 ft. 6 in. square, with walls 10 ft. thick. It has a basement and two upper stories, all once floored with timber. It is built of excellent ashlar. The basement chamber is at the ward level, but 20 ft. or more above the ditch. It is 11 ft. 6 in. square, and entered by an acutely-pointed doorway from the inner face. In its outer face is rather a singular loop. A shoulder-headed recess, 4 ft. 3 in. broad and 5 ft. deep, converges upon a loop of 4 in. opening, the sides of which are parallel for 5 ft. On the splay of the loop, in the scanty light of it, some prisoner has carved a circle with figures. Outside, in the west wall, is the mouth of a small drain from this chamber, which was evidently a prison. The first floor is at the level of the rampart walk of the outer curtain, and is entered thence by means of an external stone stair, sheltered by a parapet, 6 ft. 6 in. high. The doorway has an equilateral head, with deep mouldings, beaded angles, and a passage ribbed transversely. The chamber is 15 ft. 6 in. square. In the west wall is a garde-robe chamber, 2 ft. 6 in. broad by 10 ft. long, looped, and with an external shoot, flush with the wall. In the south wall is an equilateral arched recess, with a ribbed barrel vault and stone seats, and in it a two-light flat-topped window, trefoiled. In the east wall is a plain square-headed fire-place, and a door, also square-headed, opening into a well-stair, which ascends hence to the battlements and the upper floor. This stair is contained within a triangular projection from the tower. It ends above under a ribbed and domed covering.

ROSAMOND'S TOWER caps the S.E. angle of the curtain. It is of ashlar, 22 ft. broad by 24 ft. deep, and has no internal projection. The floors were of timber. It has a basement about 5 ft. above the court level, and a first and second floor. The basement, entered from the ward, is 10 ft. by 8 ft., and has a single loop. The gorge wall, at the rampart level, is pierced by a gallery to carry the rampart



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walk. This gallery descends and rises again 4 ft., the first floor being so much below the rampart level. This floor seems also to have been entered by an exterior stair built over the lower doorway.

The DEVIL'S or POSTERN TOWER, that N.W. of the Keep, is rectangular and of ashlar, and has exterior projection only. It is 22 ft. broad by 27 ft. deep. The basement is vaulted, and pierced by a postern passage. The inner door, pointed, opens in the bottom of the ditch of the cross curtain; it is now nearly buried. The outer door is walled up. It is pointed, of 3 ft. 6 in. opening, and placed in a square-headed recess, 6 in. deep, 5 ft. broad, by 10 ft. high, intended to lodge the bridge when up. At the foot of this door, outside, in two strong stones, are two holes, 6 in. diameter, and 18 in. deep, which contained the wooden axle of the drawbridge. Above is a central chain-hole for working the bridge. The chain must have carried a yoke or sort of splinter-bar, 4 ft. or 5 ft. long, with lateral chains fastened to the sides of the platform. This bridge must have had a special pit, since the way to it, inside and outside, lay along the bottom of the regular ditches. Above the door is a cruciform loop, and above that a plain one. The approach to this postern lay from the meadow north of the castle, up the mouth of the ditch of the place. The first floor of this tower is entered by a round-headed, Decorated door, with exterior steps, through a mural passage, 3 ft. broad and 20 ft. long, at one end of which is a garde-robe. The front floor is 8 ft. by 12 ft., with a cruciform loop. The second floor is entered from the rampart. The gorge wall coincides with the curtain, and is pierced to carry the rampart walk. Projecting from the curtain, close south of the tower, is a very handsome chamfered bracket, pierced as the shaft of a garde-robe, and worthy of more noble service.

About 12 ft. north of the tower, at the junction of the cross and main curtain, is a rectangular turret, about 12 ft. square, and pierced for the passage of the rampart walk. Its use seems to be to break the communication between the ramparts of the cross and main curtains.

The OUTER GATEHOUSE TOWER, which stands on the south or town front, between Rosamond's and the Mill Tower, in general construction seems of the date of the inner gate. Strictly speaking, it is not a gatehouse. The curtain is broken



and turns outwards, forming two parallel walls, 7 ft. thick and 20 ft. projection. They are 12 ft. apart, and between them lies the entrance. In the line of the curtain this passage is crossed by an acute arch, 2 ft. thick, the springing 15 ft. high, and above this the curtain rises to 50 ft., forming a sort of screen, giving the appearance of a tower over the gate. The flanking walls, about 20 ft. high, form a sort of barbican, and no doubt protected the drawbridge. A door above opened upon these battlements. The work is poor; there is no portcullis or portal vault. The entrance is quite unworthy of the castle.

Returning to the inner ward, no doubt the three towers mentioned by Leland were the inner gate tower, and two upon the two angles of the ward; but these are gone, though, probably, if the turf and brambles were removed, the foundations would be seen.

The Norman doorway may have opened into one of these towers. At present it fronts a recess in the curtain 6 ft. broad, barrel vaulted; and 6 ft. high to the abacus or string which marks the springing. The doorway was flanked by two nook shafts, now gone, standing upon square plinths, and with fluted capitals. The architrave is highly ornate, having a beaded angle with a moulding of pointed arches repeated. This looks like rather late Norman, and is the only bit of work in the castle distinctly referable to that period. The drip, if ever there was one, is gone. There is no rebate or trace of a door. The adjacent curtain is low and ruinous. Here are several corbels, as though to support a lean-to range of buildings. Near this door is a small building which looks modern, with four old lancets inserted, and a door which seems copied from an older one. This is said to be the chapel of the castle which Leland saw, and which was served by one chantry priest. Grose calls it a small mean building, with some old pews in it. It is now a potato-store.

Pickering Castle represents one great type of Anglo-Norman fortress, that is, a castle of Norman masonry upon an English earthwork, for the present walls, if not Norman, are unquestionably laid upon Norman lines. Here the mound does not, as is more usual, form a part of the *enceinte*, but is concentric, though placed out of centre, like the earthwork at Barwick in Elmete.

No doubt the earthworks were taken possession of and walled, either late in the eleventh or early in the twelfth century, in the Norman period, and the mass of the curtains, with the Keep and the Norman door, are probably remains of this work. But the whole fortress was rebuilt in the Decorated period, the mural towers added, the curtains raised, and the place rendered stronger. It is difficult to decide on the age of the gateways. They may be Norman or they may be of the time of Richard II., probably the former.

The domestic buildings are said to have been of timber. They are gone. There is no known well. The castle mill was upon the river a little below the castle. The ditch along the south and west has been nearly filled up; beyond it is a hollow way leading down to the river, which may be old, and intended as a second line of defence.

It is stated in Domesday that, in the time of King Edward, Pickering (Pickeringa) belonged to Earl Morcar. It was then held by the King, with four berewicks or appended manors, and some chapelries or spiritual dependencies of the parish church. The castle and its territory seem never to have been alienated from the Norman Crown. The Pipe Roll of 31 H. I. mentions that Robert de Widville rendered account for the "census rents of the forest of Pinckering." In 31 H. II., pannage was accounted for from the forest; and in 1 R. I. rents were accounted for by William Boie and Alan Fitz Geoffrey, probably the same who occurs in the same year as Alan de Pikering. In 33 H. II. the men of Pickering were assessed in a "donum" towards a royal expedition, a tax which was from time to time repeated. In 9 R. I. mention is made of the Wapentake and Town of Pickering; and in 11 John, a settlement was ordered of the boundaries between the King's Forest of Pickering and N. de Stuteville's forest.

King John was here in February, 1201; August, 1208; and March, 1210; each time for a day.

In 45 H. III. the castle was held by Hugh le Bigod against the King, with Scarborough, which castle he was monished under the Bull of Alexander VI. to surrender.

Henry III. granted Pickering to his son, Edmund Earl of Lancaster, about which time mention is made of the Manor, Fee, and Forestry of Pickering. In 13 Ed. I. the Earl had a



confirmation of the manor, castle, and forest. On the execution and attainder of Earl Thomas, Henry, Earl of Northumberland, had charge of the castle, but on the fall of Edward II., Earl Henry recovered it. When Henry of Lancaster landed at Ravensburn in 1399, he marched on and retook Pickering, then held for the King.

King Richard II. was prisoner here before his removal to Pontefract.

Peck enumerates Pickering among the royal castles, and says there was a Steward of the Lordship, a Constable of the Castle, a Master of the Game, and a Rider of the Forest.

Pickering was held for the King in the Parliamentary struggles, and breached on the west point, and dismantled. It seems never to have been alienated from the Royal demesnes. The Crown held it from the Conquest until it was granted by Henry IV. to the Earl of Lancaster, since which its history is that of the estates of the Duchy of Lancaster, of which it still forms a part.

With Pickering Castle should be mentioned a very curious, though nameless and but little known earthwork in its immediate neighbourhood. This is not even laid down, as an earthwork, in the Ordnance Map, usually so accurate, though marked as the site of a station. It is placed upon the highest part of a round grassy hill, with easy slopes, which rises upon the western or right bank of the Beck or river of Pickering, about 200 ft. above the water, and opposite to and a little lower down than the castle. The position is good, it is clear of the ravine which opens out just above the town and castle, and from it is a rich and extensive view, especially to the south and west, over Rysdale and towards Helmsley. The labour bestowed upon the work is light compared with that expended upon the earthworks of the castle, though the mound is the leading feature of both, and attests their common Saxon or early English origin.

A central mound, 90 ft. in diameter at the top and 20 ft. high, is girt by a ditch, out of which it rises, and upon the outer edge of which is a low bank. The summit of the mound is level, but is surrounded by a light circular bank, which probably was heaped up to cover the lower edge of the timber defence or residence, which no doubt was here placed. The entrance seems to have been on the south-

east side, where are marks of a way across the outer bank, and perhaps of a causeway over the ditch. The hill is enclosed, and part of it under the plough, so that no traces of any exterior or appended enclosures are visible. The work, however, though its general outline is to be traced with certainty, is much lowered, and its details weakened and rendered obscure by time and weather. It is, however, an earthwork of the same general class with Laughton, Barwick, Castleton, and others similar to them in Yorkshire and elsewhere, and with them it deserves attention. No doubt it is earlier than the castle mound of Pickering, and probably was abandoned when that was thrown up; perhaps when the wealth and power of the owner enabled him to found the Lythe or Lordship of Pickering.