

Marches Archaeology

**Phase I
South-west Tower
Wilton Castle
Bridstow
Herefordshire**

SMR: 33542

**A report on archaeological
building recording and
watching brief**

May 2005
Marches Archaeology Series 383

This report is produced by

Marches Archaeology

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**Phase I
South-west Tower
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A report on archaeological building recording and watching brief

NGR: SO 04636 38416

**Report by
Susan Fielding**

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Summary

Marches Archaeology was commissioned by Stainburn Taylor Architects to undertake a programme of building recording and analysis on the south-west tower of Wilton Castle, Bridstow, Herefordshire. The work was to take place during a programme of consolidation works, granted aided by English Heritage, and informed by an earlier assessment undertaken by Marches Archaeology. The tower is D-shaped, and dates to the later 13th century with later alterations, being partially incorporated into a late 16th century manor house and the current 18th/19th century house. The tower contained a suite of high status rooms, and may have formed part of a gatehouse structure, although further work is needed to clarify fully its original form

1 Introduction

Marches Archaeology was commissioned by Stainburn Taylor Architects, on behalf of Mr and Mrs Parslow (the client) to carry out a programme of building recording and watching brief on the south-west tower at Wilton Castle, Bridstow (SO 04636 28416). The work was to be carried out during a programme of consolidation and repair of the extant remains of the tower together with groundworks that were taking place within, and in the immediate vicinity of, the south-west tower. This programme of consolidation and repair formed Phase I of a longer term project of consolidation of Wilton Castle, and was English Heritage grant aided.

Wilton Castle is a Scheduled Ancient Monument and a Grade I Listed Building (ref: County Monument 37) and, prior to the preparation for the Phase I programme of repairs, an initial assessment of the castle remains had been undertaken in order to provide a brief historical interpretation of the site and buildings as a whole (Fielding, 2003).

2 Aims and objectives

The aims of the project were to provide:

- A drawn survey of the south-west tower
- A watching brief on all site clearance works taking place on the south-west tower i.e. the removal of vegetation and other overburden and stonework.
- Observation of all earthmoving and excavation until natural subsoil was reached excepting where such operations would affect only manifestly modern deposits.
- A stratigraphic record of all deposits and features exposed by the groundworks
- A record of the extent and depth of groundworks, together with all finds and environmental material recovered.

Building Investigation and Recording is defined by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA) as “a programme of work intended to establish the character, history, dating, form and archaeological development of a specified building, or structure, or complex and its setting, including its buried components on land, inter-tidal zone and underwater”.

The objective of Building Investigation and Recording is defined by the IFA as “to examine a specified building, or structure, or complex and its setting, in order to inform [either] the formulation of a strategy for the conservation, alteration, demolition, repair or management of a building, or structure, or complex and its setting [or] to seek a better understanding, compile a lasting record, analyse the findings/record, and then disseminate the results”.

The purpose of an Archaeological Watching Brief is defined by the IFA as “to allow, within the resources available, the preservation by record of archaeological deposits, the presence and nature of which could not be established (or established with sufficient accuracy) in advance of development or other potentially disruptive works” and “to provide an opportunity, if needed, for the watching archaeologist to signal to all interested parties, before the destruction of the material in question, that an archaeological find has been made for which the resources allocated to the watching brief itself are not sufficient to support a treatment to a satisfactory and proper standard”.

It was understood that Carrek, as the main contractor, would maintain a separate record of the extent of the works, based on the drawings of Stainburn-Taylor Architects and that this would form an archive indicating the areas altered.

3 Methodology

Documentary research

Documentary research was undertaken as part of the assessment carried out prior to the Phase I programme (Fielding, 2002), and no further research was requested as part of this phase of work.

Fieldwork

A 3-dimensional, real-time survey of all elevations and floor plans of the south-west tower was carried out using a reflectorless EDM and TheoLt to capture and download data into an AutoCAD .dwg. As vegetation, stonework or other overburden was removed this survey was extended and updated. In addition a full photographic record of areas uncovered during the clearance work was made, using 35mm black and white negatives and colour slide in order to supplement the photogrammetric survey previously carried out by the Downland Partnership.

In general the removal of vegetation, dowelling/tying/anchoring, flaunching, grouting, pointing, simple stone replacement and similar were not deemed to require close archaeological supervision, but a general monitoring of these works was carried out. However where these works were carried out in areas where significant archaeological information may have been revealed, such as wall tops and openings, a greater archaeological presence was provided.

All groundbreaking activity was carried out under archaeological supervision and a full written, drawn and photographic record made. All deposits were recorded using Marches Archaeology *pro forma* recording sheets, together with a photographic record of 35mm black and white negatives and colour slides. Sections and plans were drawn, sections normally at a scale of 1:10, and plans at a scale of 1:20. All artefacts were retained, or in the case of manifestly modern deposits a sample of artefacts, and bagged.

Office work

On completion of the fieldwork a site archive was prepared, with the written, drawn and photographic data catalogued and cross-referenced. Two-dimensional plans and elevations were produced from the three-dimensional survey data, and this illustrated report produced detailing the aims, methods and results of the Phase I works relating to the south-west tower. Only the results of the groundworks carried out in the vicinity of the south-west tower are included in this report, the results of groundworks carried out in other areas of the castle to be included in subsequent reports on other individual areas.

The finds

All finds were washed and marked with the site code (WILT03B) and appropriate context number. They were then weighed and counted, prior to being re-bagged.

4 Site description

Wilton Castle is located in the small hamlet of Bristow, standing on the bank of the River Wye opposite the historic market town of Ross-on-Wye in South Herefordshire, some eleven miles south of Hereford. It is positioned downstream of the current river crossing of the Wye, where the B4260 goes over a post-medieval bridge.

The site consists of an irregular quadrilateral inner ward with medieval curtain walls on the west, north and east sides. A large D-shaped tower stands at the south-west corner, with a smaller octagonal tower at the north-west corner and a round tower half way along the east curtain wall. A further tower existed at the north-east corner, but its form can not be determined from the above ground remains.

The south end of the east curtain wall, together with all the structures of the south part of the castle have disappeared, built over by a post-medieval house of 16th century date which is also ruinous. A late medieval house has been built into the south-west corner of the Scheduled Ancient Monument. On the west, north and south sides of the curtain walls the land slopes away, forming a scarp on the east side and one side of a moat on the north and west sides.

5 Archaeological and historical background

This historical background is based on ‘Wilton Castle 1066 to 1644’ (Remfry 1998) and ‘Wilton Castle: Its present condition and past history’ (Tweed 1884).

The earliest documentary reference for Wilton occurs in the Domesday Book of 1086, when it is described as part of the vill of Cleeve, held by William Baderon, Lord of Monmouth. By the mid 12th century, Wilton was in the hands of Miles Gloucester, Earl of Herefordshire, confirmed by the Empress Matilda in a document of 1141. It was subsequently inherited in 1143 by his son, Earl Roger of Herefordshire who appears to have lost Wilton in 1154 when, after the accession of Henry II to the throne, he laid claim a number of other properties, including the castle of Gloucester. In response Henry II stripped him of many of his possessions, including lands at Wilton.

Wilton was subsequently granted to the Norman-French Longchamp family sometime in the second half of the 12th century. The exact date of the Longchamp’s gain is not known, but it is probable that Henry II granted the lands to Hugh Longchamp, a long-time companion to the king, in gratitude for his services in the Welsh campaign of 1155-65. Hugh continued to form part of the royal retinue after this date, spending much of the remainder of his life in Normandy, acting as bailiff for the royal estates there. On his death he was found to owe the crown a large sum of money, and his estates, including Wilton, were promptly seized.

Gerald of Wales first mentions the presence of a castle at Wilton in 1188, including it in a sentence with the larger castles of Goodrich and Chepstow in his *Journey*, but offers no description of it. It is likely that building of the first fortifications had taken place at some point in the 30 years previous under the direction of Hugh Longchamp.

Hugh Longchamp’s sons were all staunch supporters of Richard I, and during the early part of his reign the family rose in prominence, with Henry Longchamp regaining the land at Wilton. Their loyalty to the king caused the family to be treated with suspicion by John,

acting as King in Richard I's absence and, in the early 1190s, Henry was stripped of his position as Sheriff of Herefordshire and imprisoned. On his release in 1193 he set himself up to usurp the throne from John, a campaign which ended on Richard I's return to England the following year.

On Richard's death, King John again confiscated Henry's lands around Hereford, and Henry made a fine with him to recover them. As he was already in considerable debt to the crown, John kept control of Wilton Castle and put it in the keeping of William Cantilupe. During this time a documentary reference states that the chancellor, Hubert Burgh, had spent 43s on building work at Wilton Castle.

Henry Longchamp finally regained Wilton Castle in 1208, but his gain was short lived, with his death recorded in 1210, possibly during another Welsh campaign. William Cantilupe was granted the castle and surrounding land in return of a sizable pledge to the crown, although the Longchamp family is still recorded as paying for other lands at Wilton. In 1231 Henry's son, also Henry Longchamp, is recorded as having regained Wilton Castle, although on his death in 1237 it returned to the control of Cantilupe.

Both Cantilupe and Longchamp, in 1219 and 1234 respectively, were granted timber from the royal forest of Dean, for the purpose of building work at Wilton Castle, but in neither case is the work carried out detailed.

Matilda Cantilupe, wife of Reginald Grey, claimed inheritance of the castle as granddaughter of Henry Longchamp at an inquiry in 1247 and, by 1261 at the latest, Wilton was in the hands of John Grey, Reginald and Matilda's son. Active in the campaigns against the Welsh in the mid 13th century, John Grey was entrusted by the crown to hold the Marches against Welsh attack. In 1263 a total of 20 oaks were granted to him from the Forest of Dean, although it is not recorded if these were for works at Wilton or elsewhere. John spent much of the remainder of his life acting as Justice of Chester, and was heavily involved in the affairs of North Wales. It is unlikely that he spent much time at, or paid much attention to the affairs of, Wilton Castle during this time, appearing to concentrate on his castle at Ruthin, North Wales.

Wilton Castle remained in the Grey family until the early 17th century, when it was sold to Charles Brydges. It was held by the Brydges family on behalf of the Royalist cause until 1644, when Massey, a parliamentarian commander, took the castle (by then partly rebuilt as a house) by force. It withstood a counter attack by Royalist forces later the same year, but soon after was burnt out by Royalist commanders. The buildings were left ruined, and sold in 1722 to St Guy's Hospital in London. At some point during the late 18th century the current house was subsequently constructed within the ruins of the medieval castle and house.

6 The Results

Building recording and above ground watching brief

The south-west tower is located at the south end of the west curtain wall, and forms the termination of the upstanding remains in this area of the site (Plate 1). It is an elongated D-shaped in plan with its main axis running north-east-east to south-west-west, and has at its north-eastern end been incorporated into the late post-medieval house, making it difficult to determine how much of the original fabric survives in this area. It is the largest of the

surviving towers at Wilton Castle, measuring approximately 18m long and 10m wide, and comprising a basement, ground floor and first floor with probable access to the roof level. On the south side of the tower are the remains of a small, two-storey structure, the exact form of which is unclear.

Phase I (mid 13th century)

The south-west tower was constructed to an elongated D-shape plan of large, coursed, ashlar sandstone blocks with a pinkish-brown sandy mortar. The tower is orientated north-east-east to south-west-west, and consists of three storeys with a roof level (Fig. 2). The western end is semi-circular, and around the base of the external elevation on the southern side of the tower a battered plinth is visible (Plate 2). On the north side the ground level obscures the base of the wall, but it would certainly be furnished with an identical feature.

On only one small area does the wall appear to survive close to its full height (Fig. 4), and here there are indications that the stonework corbelled out at the wall-head. On the southern side of the tower is a small projection (Figs. 3 & 4), which has been truncated at its southern end, the original extent of which is unknown.

At basement level a single room (Room 1) occupied the whole floor area of the tower. This was accessed externally at the west end of the tower via a narrow doorway (D9), with a door-head comprised of a two-centred arch decorated with a simple straight-cut chamfer on the internal and external faces (Figs. 4 and 7; Plates 2 and 3). A second door (D10) entered the basement from the north, being reached by a set of stone steps leading down from the courtyard at ground floor level (Figs. 7-9). This similarly consisted of a two-centred arch, with a simple, straight-cut chamfer and moulded stops on the south face, but with rising orders of five arches decorating the north approach to the door from the base of the steps, each decorated with a straight cut chamfer (Plate 5).

The room was lit by two identical windows (W17 & W22) set within the south wall, both of which have been subsequently blocked (Fig. 6). The window openings themselves were small, measuring 0.67m by 0.63m, and virtually square with a shallow arched head, but were set within a deep reveal, splayed on both sides and with a deeply sloping cill, therefore maximising the amount of light admitted through the opening (Plate 4). The rear arch of the reveal is two-centred with a straight cut chamfer, widening out on window (W17) to a larger recess with straight sided reveals also with a two-centred arch head with a similar chamfer. On either side of this recess was a stone bench, one of which retains a curved stone half way along acting as a divider. Window (W22) had a similar form originally, although the surviving part of the recess shows no evidence of a bench.

There is no visible evidence of access directly between the basement and ground floor rooms and although this may have been via a trapdoor and ladder/wooden stair arrangement that any evidence for it would have disappeared with the ground floor floor, it is likely that they were not linked. The steps leading from the north basement door (D10) led to a doorway of similar style to the other openings - a two-centred arch, chamfered on the north face and with a stepped jamb on the south face indicating the door opened into the stairwell (Fig. 10). This door was set in the north face of the south-west tower and would have led either into the open courtyard or into the ground floor level of another building built up against the north side of the tower.

The ground floor appears similarly to have comprised a single room (Room 2) entered externally from the north by a larger doorway (D12), indicated by the surviving eastern reveal of the opening through the thickness of the north wall of the tower and part of a chamfered rear arch (Figs. 5 and 8). This doorway would have, as now, led to the top of the moat scarp outside of the west curtain wall creating, along with that in the basement, two external doorways in the western end of the tower. Within the thickness of the north wall of the tower was a short passageway leading to the base of a staircase leading to the first floor. From this passageway a narrow doorway (D18) with a more pronounced two-centred arch also decorated with a simple chamfer, gave internal access to the ground floor.

This room is the only one within the tower for which any evidence of heating survives. In the north wall was a large fireplace, which has been almost completely blocked at a later date, and so is visible only as an outline, with a small section of the west inset (Fig. 8). It was lit by two windows in the west end of the tower, W23 of which only the southern splayed reveal survives, and W26 for which only a stepped cill remains (Figs. 4 & 7).

Two further doorways are evident in the south wall, D7 and D14 (Fig. 6). D7 is a narrow, two-centred arch doorway, also chamfered, which accesses a dogleg passage leading to the south projection. At ground floor level this extends approximately 3m to the south having a barrel vaulted ceiling and the remains of a creamy white lime plaster on the internal faces of the walls (Plate 7). In the east wall is an arrow loop (A1), formed of a single vertical slit almost the full height of the ground floor, with circular enlargements at the top and bottom (Fig. 11, plate 8). This is set off-centre within a recess, the northern reveal of which has a double step and with a chamfered arch over the top. Further to the south, the west wall contained a second window/loop opening (W29), only the northern side of which survives.

The first floor was reached by a stone staircase set within the thickness of the north wall of the tower, only the apsidal shaped well of which survives, the steps being completely removed (Figs. 9 and 10). The base of the stairs was accessed by doorway D18 from the ground floor room (Plate 6), and possibly from a second door at the east end of the passage. At the top of the stairs a small trefoil headed window W20 in the north wall of the passage lit the stairwell (Fig. 10), immediately beyond which a doorway the full width of the stairwell led into a passageway running west, also within the thickness of the wall (Plate 11). Immediately to the right of the door was an opening, which appears from the altered remains to have originally been a window (D15), overlooking the inner courtyard, while to the left a doorway (D13) accessed the first floor room of the tower. Beyond this door a small cupboard or niche, approximately 1.5m by 0.5m was set into the south side of the passageway (Fig. 9).

Towards the west end of the passageway it split (Fig. 7), with a doorway on the left (D30) accessing a stone stepped spiral staircase, lit by an arrow loop, that rose to the roof level (Plate 10). Beyond the door to the right (D31) the passageway continued for approximately 2.70m, the west end terminating in a deeply splayed reveal containing an arrow loop A2 (Fig. 4). In the north wall of this section of the passage was a large opening, later blocked (Fig. 10). There is no visible evidence for a jamb or doorhead arch, indicating that rather than being a doorway, the passage branched off and continued to the north, along the inner face of the west wall, possibly acting a building at first floor level.

As stated above, D13 (Figs. 8 and 9) led into the main first floor room of the tower, the majority of the south, west and east walls of which have been lost. The position of two windows survive (Fig. 6), one at W15 (Fig. 3) which has been radically altered at a later date,

and the second, W13 (Fig. 7), represented solely by the surviving western splayed reveal. Between these two windows doorway D8 (Figs. 3 and 6) led into the first floor of the projection on the south side of the tower (Plate 9). Immediately either side of this doorway within the passageway formed by the projection were windows (W27 and W28), only the north jamb and part of the cill of which of each survives (Figs. 3, 4 and 7).

At the east end of the main first floor room, a doorway (D33) in the north wall (Fig. 9; Plate 12) led to a small room over the main staircase, which may have been a chapel (Plate 13). This was lit from the north by three windows (W31-33), two of which were blocked at a later date, but which can be seen by the surviving western example to have been lancet windows with trefoil headed decoration (Fig. 10; Plate 14). Three further openings are visible in the lower parts of the north, east and south walls, a small niche or cupboard in the south wall with a smaller opening below, and the third in the lower north corner of the east wall. It is unclear what the function of the small openings at the base of the wall may be.

The spiral staircase at the west end of the passageway in the thickness of the north wall led up to roof level (Figs. 8 and 9). The exact form of the entrance onto roof level is unclear as only the lower part of the wall surrounding the stairwell survives, but it opened out onto a flat roof that, to the north of the stairwell at least, was covered with large stone flags.

Phase II (15th century)

In the 15th century W15 (Figs. 3 and 6) on the first floor was remodelled. The splayed reveal was widened and the inner arch replaced with a round headed form, while the Phase I window opening was completely replaced with a round-headed window with a central keystone (Plate 15). No other alterations are apparent from this date in the surviving remains.

Phase III (late 16th century)

In the late 16th century, the castle was replaced as the primary building on the site by the construction of a less defensive manor house in the south-east corner of the site. The east end of the tower is likely to have been affected by this construction, and was partially incorporated into the new house, but the fact that both the tower and the remains of the 16th century house have been encompassed by a later 18th/19th century house makes it impossible to determine fully the form of this phase of change.

One feature visible within the standing remains that probably dates to this phase is a brick built oven, placed within, and blocking, the dog-legged passageway on the first floor of the projecting structure on the south side of the tower (Fig. 11, Plate 16). The oven itself is circular with a domed roof of bricks laid in a pattern of concentric circles, and with a small door accessed from within the south end of the passage and a flue leading out through D7 (Fig. 6). This doorway was otherwise blocked to retain loose rubble which infilled the passageway behind the oven.

How the position of the oven fitted within the layout of the early post-medieval house is unclear due to the later clearance of the west side of this building for the construction of the late 18th/19th century house. The oven clearly does not relate to that later structure however, so it must be assumed that it was associated with the Phase III building.

Phase IV (Late 18th/19th century)

In the late 18th or 19th century the current stone house was built incorporating what remained standing of the Phase I south-west tower at its eastern end and the west end of the Phase III house. The west external wall of the house bisected the tower on a north-south axis, with a further lean-to structure built within the remains of the west end of the tower.

At basement level the east wall was demolished and replaced with a thinner stone wall further to the east leaving the scar of the original wall line on the internal face of the south wall (Fig. 6), and a set of stone steps was constructed in the north-east corner of the room leading to the ground floor of the house. In the western half of the basement the ground level was built up by approximately one metre and a single storey lean-to structure built against the north wall of the tower and the west wall of the house. This was also constructed of stone, probably reused from elsewhere on the site, possibly from within the south-west tower. To the north a replacement set of steps was constructed leading from D10 to the ground floor of the house (Fig. 7).

D9 (Figs. 4 and 7) at the west end of the basement was altered, with the threshold raised in accordance with the partial infilling of the basement in that area of the tower. The north reveal of the doorway was refaced in brick, together with part of the internal facing of the west wall to the north of the door.

At ground floor level a square-headed doorway (D20) was inserted in the north wall of the passageway opposite D18 (Fig. 10) allowing access between the passage and the northern service rooms of the 19th century house. Further to the west a ground floor room was hewn out from the thickness of the north wall of the tower immediately to the west of the Phase I staircase leading from the basement level door D10. On the east side of the staircase at the same level a smaller cupboard was inserted into the fabric of the wall (Fig. 10).

The first floor level of the Phase IV house was constructed at a level lower than that of the Phase I tower, and as a consequence two doors (D34 and D35) were cut through the Phase I stairwell to give access to the Phase IV rooms to the north and south of the north wall of the tower (Figs. 9 and 10). This necessitated the blocking of the top of the Phase I doorway (D33) between the first floor room and the probable chapel, the base being cut by the new doorway D34 (Fig. 9; Plate 12). To the west of this the vaulted ceiling of the first floor passageway was relined in brick, and the Phase I window in the north wall was partly rebuilt in the same material.

Phase V (20th century)

The work carried out in the 20th century took place in the form of repairs to the fabric of the south-west tower such at the west, curved, end of the tower where the facing stone was replaced on the and external and part of the internal faces at basement level (Fig. 4). The ground level outside of the tower was increased substantially.

Below Ground Watching Brief

Trench 5 (Fig. 12)

Trench 5 was a test-pit measuring 80cm by 80cm, and was excavated against the south side of the south-west tower to a depth of 1.34m in order to investigate the base of the wall and

the foundations. This revealed the ashlar wall of the tower continuing down, sloping out by a distance of 0.25m over the depth of the test-pit, forming a continuation of the skirt at the base of the tower.

Against the wall was a build up of loose, silty brown topsoil to a depth of 0.25m, below which was a thick deposit of reddish brown silts containing fragments of sandstone, charcoal, mortar animal bone and pottery of 19th date. This deposit was not bottom and appeared to represent major ground level increase during the later post-medieval period.

Trench 7 (Fig. 13)

Trench 7 was excavated to the north of the existing house, and was a shallow trench created by the removal of a cobbled area forming a path within the south-west corner of the courtyard. The cobbles were 19th century in date, laid on edge in a matrix of dark brown silty loam. Below this surface the loam continued down and was bottomed within the trench.

In the western part of the trench the remains of stone wall were revealed, orientated roughly east-west and between 1m and 1.08m north of the house. This wall (702) was seen only in plan but appeared to be constructed of large blocks of crudely ashlar sandstone, and contained a door opening approximately 1m from its western end. The opening was flanked on either side by a jamb stone decorated with a straight cut chamfer, and lined up with the Phase 1 doorway (D10) inside the house.

Trench 17 (Fig. 14)

Trench 17 consisted of the level reduction of a raised flower-bed to the south of the south-west tower, together with the further excavation of a sondage against the south end of the projection on the south side of the south-west tower. The flowerbed was reduced by a depth of approximately 1.10m to the level of the car park, while the sondage was excavated to a depth of 1.20m below that.

A thin topsoil (1700), approximately 0.15m in depth was spread across the area of the flowerbed and contained numerous artefacts of 19th and 20th century date, including glass and china. Below this was a thicker deposit of orangey-brown silts (1701) also containing post-medieval glass and pottery, representing deliberate dumping to increase the ground level in the later post-medieval period. This overlay a thin deposit of grey ash (1702), which in turn overlay a thick deposit of grey-brown sandy silt (1703) containing large quantities of sandstone rubble also containing earlier post-medieval pottery and glass. The majority of these sandstone pieces were relatively small in size, and were degraded, with no signs of tool marks or carvings visible on any of the pieces.

This overlay a second deposit (1704) containing even higher quantities of sandstone rubble together with other building debris including mortar and flecks of charcoal. This deposit was not bottomed, but both (1703) and (1704) appear to represent layers of demolition material originating from the structure on the south side of the south-west tower.

All of these deposits butted up against two stone walls revealed by the level reduction of the flower bed. The first of these, (1705), was constructed of ashlar blocks bonded with a white mortar containing grit and charcoal flecks. It was 0.65m thick and ran roughly north south from the south-east corner of the projected passageway of the south-west tower. At its northern end it butted up against wall (1706), a thinner stone wall running east-west across

the southern end of the south projection, sealing in the deposits within the base of the passageway. (1706) post-dates the masonry of the tower, butting up against the truncated ends of the east and west walls of the passageway at basement level up to the ground floor level of the passage and containing the silts forming the earth floor of the passageway. It was constructed of a single skin of smaller, roughly squared stones which were coursed and bedded with a white mortar containing moderate quantities of grit.

The sondage was excavated against the south side of this wall in order to try and determine the depth of its foundations. The wall continued to the full depth of 1.20m below the reduced level of the flowerbed, and its base was not found, with deposits (1702) to (1704) butting up against the south face of the wall.

Trench 18 (Fig. 15)

Trench 18 comprised a drainage trench extending west from the west entrance of the south-west tower, some 12m to the base of the west moat, and then running north for a further 11m along the base of the moat.

The trench was dug to a depth of between 1.2m at the western end and 1.5m at the northern end and revealed a sequence of deposits dating from the 19th and 20th century. Deposits (1801) and (1802) were both 20th century layers containing fragments of plastic, clinker, and cement, dumped with the express purpose of building up the area to the west of the tower for use as a car park. (1803), underlying (1802) at the west end of the trench and consisting of a localised deposit of brick and sandstone fragments can probably be associated with this activity.

At the west angle of the trench the cut for a modern pipe trench which runs north-east to south-west, and which is cut to a depth of 0.90m. This contained a late 20th century plastic drainage pipe and was infilled with (1806), a deposit identical to (1801).

Further to the west similar layers of post-medieval deposits (1807, 1808, 1811) included a small area of cobbling (1809), consisting of small/medium, well rounded pebbles laid on end in a soft greeny grey sand (1810).

7 Discussion

The medieval castle was a structure designed essentially to provide a defended residence for a lord, maintaining his position within the local landscape and providing a focal point for those subservient to him, as well as providing for their security in times of instability.

Although not unknown in Britain prior to the Norman Conquest, it was only after 1066 that the castle in its motte form became common. It was during the later 12th and early 13th century however that substantial advances were made in developing the form of stone built castles to increase their efficiency both in terms of their military and residential function. Many of these developments were made as a result of the third crusade which introduced western leaders to new forms of military architecture, mostly notably the ideas of concentric defence and the heavily defended gatehouse.

The D-shaped tower was introduced as part of this scheme of improvements, most commonly used as an integral part of a gatehouse, but also found forming corner towers within the defensive circuits of the curtain walls. The earliest examples in Britain appear in the second quarter of the 13th century, at Beeston Castle (1225) and Cricceth (1250) where pairs of D-shaped towers with a passage between formed gatehouses, and at Barnwell Castle (1264) where a single tower was located at the corner of the curtain wall. Its use in forming a gatehouse structure culminated in the late 13th century, with structures such as the gatehouse at Harlech (1280s) and Beaumaris (1295-1330) (both formed by pairs of D-shaped towers flanking a passageway) and at Goodrich (1280) where a single large D-shaped tower formed one side of the entrance passage.

Militarily as individual towers within the circuit of the defensive walls, D-shaped towers had an advantage over the circular towers that they succeeded in that they projected further forward from the curtain wall allowing greater flanking fire to be brought upon attackers. Due to their shape they could also be built on a larger scale than circular towers, giving a larger roof area to house artillery, a prime example being provided by Marten's Tower forming the south-west corner of Chepstow Castle and constructed in 1285-93. In addition, the D-shaped tower was commonly built with a battered plinth around the base of the external face protecting the external walls against the employment of sapping and undermining, a weak point in the defence of circular towers and often exploited by attackers.

In the stone castles of the earlier 12th century the entrance had traditionally been a weak point in the defensive circuit of the curtain wall, commonly being a simple door through the curtain wall, with the main defensive aspect represented by strongly fortified keep within the walls. In the 13th century greater emphasis was placed on defending the approach and entrance to the castle, commonly by flanking the entrance passage by one or more towers.

The earliest example of a D-shaped tower gatehouse can be found at Dover dated to the 1170s, with its use continuing through to the early 1400s, at a wide range of castles throughout Britain, the form reaching its zenith in the Edwardian castles of North Wales, in particular Harlech and Beaumaris. In such cases the three elements of the two towers and a passageway were comprehensively integrated to form a single structure. Such gatehouses were always at least two or three storeys high, and often approached by a causeway or bridge, which could be further defended from the outer end by outworks or a barbican. The entrance itself was usually formed by a passageway containing the main gate, and commonly further defended by various combinations of portcullises, arrow loops and "murder" holes through which stones could be dropped or water dropped onto any fires, Caernarfon boasting five gates, six portcullises and "murder" holes in addition to arrow loops covering the length of the passageway.

The passageway was commonly flanked by two D-shaped towers of equal size, as found in castles such as Beeston and Rhuddlan of the early 13th century through to the later castles of Harlech and Beaumaris, the latter having two opposing gatehouse of massive proportions. The passage could also be flanked by towers of differing size and shape however, such as at Pembroke where it comprised of one D-shaped and one square tower or Goodrich where the gatehouse is comprised of a passageway between a large D-shaped tower on one side, and a thickened section of the curtain wall with a passageway within it leading to a small guardroom at the enlarged end at the front of the gatehouse, on the other.

At Wilton Castle it is difficult to determine whether the D-shaped south-west tower was part of a larger gatehouse structure, or was a corner tower. The damage inflicted on the southern wall of the tower has obscured much evidence, the only remaining indication that the tower was part of a larger structure being the stub walls projecting to the south.

Test pitting and trenching around the tower has revealed that the ground level has been built up considerably outside of the tower in this area, in the medieval period being at least as low as D9 into the west end of the 'basement' level of the tower. It is therefore possible that there was a gate adjacent to the tower at 'basement' level, the stub walls being the surviving remains of a first and second floor structure wall spanning the width of the gateway to meet a further tower or other structure to the south. The passages appearing to lead from D7 at 'ground' floor level and D14 at first floor level would link the two structures flanking the entrance. The arrow loop present in the east wall of the ground floor (A1) and the window in the first floor (W24) of the projection, together with the two windows lighting the 'basement' level room, indicate however that there would have been no covered passageway running east from the gate. Therefore any gatehouse must have consisted of two structures flanking an open passage with a gate and wall defending the east end. No evidence of a second tower or structure to the south is known, but the majority of the southern circuit of the medieval castle is no longer evident above ground level, and the fact that this area is now used as a car park has made it unsuitable for the geophysical investigations carried out so far.

A comparison for Wilton can be seen in the form of Ruthin Castle, Clwyd, also largely built by John Grey in the 13th century. Here the gatehouse is formed by two D-shaped towers, of a similar size to the south-west tower at Wilton. These towers flank a long narrow entrance consisted of an open passage, defended from the outer end by a gateway on the ground floor, built into a single thickness wall linking the two towers approximately half way along the length of the towers.

Ruthin can also be closely compared to Wilton in terms of the form of the construction and the residential accommodation that it offers. An identical doorway to D10 leading from the basement with its five rising orders of arches (Fig. 9) can be found in the same position at Ruthin, leading from a basement room lit by two windows of identical form to those in the south wall of the south-west tower basement.

In residential terms the D-shaped towers of the 13th century performed the function of providing larger structures in which substantial suites of private accommodation could be placed. From the beginning of the 13th century the lord had been starting to distance himself from the communal atmosphere of the main hall, providing himself with private rooms for eating and sleeping that allowed him to be physically separate from the rest of the household. By the mid 13th century this had developed into a suite of rooms, including a bedchamber, solar and often a private chapel, commonly located over a basement room. This separation of rooms and their functions was a physical reflection of the regulation and expansion of the household that is known from documentary evidence of the period.

The D-shaped tower in both its forms, but particularly as part of a gatehouse of two towers where two suites could be linked, allowed for the development of such accommodation. While such accommodation was initially built for the lord, those suites located in gatehouses quickly became utilised as residences for the constable of the castle who would have been in charge of the castle during the, often frequent, absences of the lord.

At Wilton the accommodation can be divided into a basement level room, for which the only known access is directly from the inner courtyard to the north of the tower, with no surviving evidence of direct access to the ground floor room, and a suite of rooms above. This suite is comprised of a ground floor room, possibly linked to another structure by the dog-leg passage leading to the south, and the first floor room, also possibly linked to a structure to the south by a passage over that on the ground floor, and with a small, adjacent room which is likely to have functioned as a private chapel (Plate 13). These rooms were linked into unit by the staircase located within the north wall of the tower and the passage at the top of it, which was accessed directly from doorways from the ground and first floor rooms.

Comparisons of similar suites located with gatehouses are common, and again Ruthin in particular can be closely compared to the layout at Wilton. As stated the basement at Ruthin is lit by two windows of identical form to W17 and W22 at Wilton (Fig. 6), and access is provided by a doorway formed by the same rising orders of five arches. Similar suites are also found in D-shaped towers acting as corner towers within the curtain wall, two examples being Marten's Tower at Chepstow and the south-east tower at Llansteffan. This latter example was three storeyed with a thickened side wall, similar in form to the north wall of the south-west at Wilton, containing a staircase accessing the ground and first floor rooms, and ultimately the roof level. On the opposing side a rectangular projection contained garderobes.

The south projection at Wilton Castle is difficult to explain if it is not viewed as a passageway leading to an associated structure forming a gatehouse. The form of it indicates it is clearly not housing garderobe chambers, and the placement of the window W29 and ground floor arrow loop A1 facing to the east suggests that it does not represent the line of the curtain wall continuing to the south.

The accommodation provided by the south-west tower is clearly of high quality and status and may well have been used by John Grey when in residence. His long absences throughout the 13th century, when his focus was on his role in the wars in north Wales, may suggest that in practice the rooms were occupied by the constable of the castle.

The exact date of the construction is unclear, but probably lies within the final third of the 13th century. The form of arches used in the door and window openings are in the Decorative style, although plain in terms of chamfering and mouldings, the only more closely datable feature being the moulded stop on the southern face of D10 (Fig. 8), similar to one found at Hereford Cathedral dating to 1260. Ruthin gatehouse which, as discussed, is of very similar design was constructed in the 1280s, and it is possible to see Wilton as a copy of this structure, built by John Grey when he moved his base back to Herefordshire in the last decades of the 13th century. Alternatively it may be contemporary with Ruthin, providing additional strength to Wilton Castle at a time of renewed tension along the Welsh border caused by the growing power of Llewellyn ap Gryffydd in the 1270s.

8 Acknowledgements

Marches Archaeology was commissioned to carry out the work on behalf of Alan and Susan Parslow, and they are thanked for their unfailing enthusiasm and interest in the archaeology and co-operation throughout the Phase I work. The advice and support of Bill Klemperer, Chris Miners, Paul Stamper and Judith Lee of English Heritage, Ian Stainburn and Suzanne

Clark of Stainburn-Taylor Architects and Martyn Peters, structural engineer, is gratefully acknowledged.

The conservation building contractors were Carrek, and grateful thanks go to all their on-site workers for their considerable aid and co-operation during the fieldwork, in particular the site foreman Kevin Lock. Martin Holland, Steve Cowley and Kevin Lock are also especially thanked for their work during the excavation of many of the trial pits. Nick Wall, Wilton Castle gardener is thanked for his help in the excavation of the remaining trial pits and his co-operation during the watching brief on other groundwork's carried out by him and Alan Parslow.

The site work was carried out by Susan Fielding of Marches Archaeology between October 2003 and August 2004, and the project was managed by Richard Stone. Jo Wainwright and Vicky Sears aided with post-excavation work, in particular the finds processing.

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Appendix: Trench Summaries

Trench No.5	m x m	South west-North east	mOD
Context	Description		Thickness (m)
500	Greyish-brown, loose silty topsoil.		
501	Reddish-brown silts, quite soft with fragments of charcoal, mortar, burnt roots and small pebbles. Few fragments of glass, pottery, bone etc... all post-medieval in date. Very thick, generally homogenous deposit, other than towards the top of the layer where there are concentrated lenses of mortar.		
502	Stone wall of ashlar sandstone forming the outside face of the south-west tower. High quality ashlar to the depth of excavation with no sign of foundation courses or a footing trench.		
Note	Trial pit excavated for the inspection of foundations.		

Trench No. 7	m x m	South west-North east	mOD
Context	Description		Thickness (m)
700	Layer of small cobbles set within the confines of the path.		
701	Dark grey brown silty loam directly underlying (701), and into which the cobbles of (701) are laid. Contains occasional small pebbles and fragments of brick.		N/E
702	Remainder of stone wall orientated roughly east-west parallel with the north wall of the SW tower and current house. Includes probable door opening flanked by chamfered jambstones. Seen only in plan as not excavated.		
Note	Area reduction for the improvement of surface drainage		

Trench No. 17	m x m	South west-North east	mOD
Context	Description		Thickness (m)
1700	Topsoil. Mid grey-brown loamy topsoil containing 19 th and 20 th century glass, china, animal bone and brick.		0.15m
1701	Dark grey-brown build up deposit containing late post-medieval glass, china, brick, animal bone etc... and common small pebbles.		0.30-0.70m
1702	Thin deposit consisting of 65-70% ash mixed with grey-brown silty sands.		0.10-0.15m
1703	Soft grey-brown silty sand containing large quantities of sandstone rubble, none of which had recognizable working or moulding. Also contained animal bone and glass.		
1704	Pinkish grey-brown sandy silt again containing very high quantities of sandstone rubble, together with flecks of charcoal and mortar.		
1705	Stone wall orientated north-south and forming eastern boundary of level reduction. Blocks laid with a very white mortar containing grit and charcoal flecks. Butts up against (1706) at its northern end.		0.55m nfe
1706	Stone wall orientated east-west across the south end of the south projection of the SW tower. Constructed of small, roughly squared stones, coursed with a white mortar containing grit.		1.10m nfe
1707	Brick wall of 19 th /early 20 th century date, constructed to contain an area of raised flowerbed.		
Note	Area of flower bed reduction		

Trench No. 18	m x m	South west-North east	mOD
Context	Description		Thickness (m)
1801	Dark grey-brown silty loam containing modern brick, clinker, plastic etc... known to be build-up layer deposited within last 20 years.		
1802	Mid grey-brown silty loam with frequent well-rounded gravels, small fragments of brick, clinker, cement and animal bone. Another modern build up deposit to raised height of driveway. Small concentration of sandstone fragments at base of deposit next to western doorway of SW tower.		
1803	Mid reddish brown clayey silt containing frequent flecks of mortar and common small fragments of brick, sandstone fragments and charcoal. Concentration of limestone fragments at the top of the deposit, localized in the section immediately next to the western door of the SW tower.		
1804	West wall of SW tower. Constructed of very large ashlar sandstone blocks. Wall to north of doorway has been reduced in thickness during later works, while to the south much of the facing stone is lost above original ground level. Ashlar blocks of wall below doorway forming surface for entrance. Sloping skirt at base of exposed wall.		
1805	Cut of modern pipe trench running north-east to south-west across the drainage trench approximately 1.5m east of the south-west corner of the trench. Cuts through deposits?????. Filled with (1806) with pipe at base of trench.		
1806	Fill of modern pipe trench [1805]. Similar to 1801.		
1807	Lens of mortar, tile, brick and sandstone fragments and slate. Underlies (1810) to the west of pipe cut [1805].		
1808	Grey-brown silt containing large quantities of ash and charcoal.		
1809	Layer of cobbles extending for approximately ?m north from the south-west corner of the trench. Cobbles are rounded, and average 5-10cm in size, laid in a single layer. Overlain by (1808) and lain into the top surface of (1810).		
1810	Thin layer of green-grey sand into which cobbles (1809) are laid.		
1811	Mid grey-brown loamy silt with heavy root activity from surrounded trees. Frequent lenses of ash and charcoal, and fragments of brick, mortar and slate.		
Note	Trench excavated for drainage pipe.		



Plate 1: South-west tower from the south-west



Plate 2: External battered base of tower



Plate 3: Door D9 at west end of tower, basement level



Plate 4: Window W17 in south wall of basement



Plate 5: Door D10 from basement level



Plate 6: Door D18 Leading from ground floor room to base of main staircase



Plate 7: Passageway leading off south side of south-west tower



Plate 8: Arrow loop A1 in east wall of south passageway



Plate 9: Door D8 leading into first floor passage to south



Plate 10: Spiral staircase to roof level



Plate 11: West end of first floor passageway, northern arm



Plate 12: Door D33 between main first floor room and possible chapel room



Plate 13: First floor room, possible chapel, looking south-east



Plate 14: Window W31, one of three lighting possible chapel



Plate 15: Window W1 altered in Phase II



Plate 16: Phase III oven inserted into dog-leg passage