

# **The archaeological monitoring of building repairs at Clifford Castle, Herefordshire, 2017**



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# The archaeological monitoring of building repair work at Clifford Castle, Herefordshire, in 2017

## Summary

*An archaeological watching-brief was maintained on building repairs, re-pointing and soft-capping to the motte-top structures of Clifford Castle, Herefordshire, from January to June 2017. The most notable new discoveries were of paved surfaces belonging, in all probability, to wall-walks on top of the west curtain wall and adjoining NW tower; these lay within the base courses of a parapet wall. There was also archaeological evidence of past gardening activity on the wall top. Details of the junction of the 'hall' (most likely a first-floor chamber block) and NW tower were elucidated by the survey and subsequent excavation. The first-floor accommodation, heated by a previously-undiscovered wall fireplace in the north wall, oversailed a barrel-vaulted passage at the western end of the undercroft.*

*Although all the motte-top buildings were built in a single phase of work, no direct, close, dating evidence was forthcoming; the buildings are suspected to be of early-mid- 13<sup>th</sup>-century date, probably by Walter Clifford III, perhaps c.1230. Towering above the Wye and its floodplain, with close-set multiple turrets, the castle would have impressed from afar; nevertheless, examination of the overlapping arcs of fire from its towers suggests that the buildings on the motte top were designed to be militarily effective.*

**Disclaimer:** It should not be assumed that land referred to in this document is accessible to the public. Location plans are indicative only. NGRs are accurate to approximately 10m. Measured dimensions are accurate to within 1m at a scale of 1:500, 0.1m at 1:50, and 0.02m at 1:20.

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## Introduction

At the beginning of 2017 repair work began at Clifford Castle, Herefordshire, grant-aided by Historic England; at that time the buildings were in a poor state of repair and the castle appeared on the 2016 *Heritage at Risk* Register. The repair work was undertaken on behalf of the site owner by the building contractors Treasure & Son, under the overall direction of Nick Joyce Ltd, conservation architects. The writer of this report was engaged by Tim Hoverd of Herefordshire Council to undertake an archaeological watching-brief on the repair work on the motte-top buildings on behalf of Herefordshire Archaeology. Clifford Castle is a Grade 1 Listed Building (1167903) and is Scheduled as an Ancient Monument (ref SM HE36, HA 1001774).

### Introduction to the site, its buildings and previous work

#### *General description*

Clifford Castle is a classic example of a larger motte-and-bailey castle upgraded in stone, in this case in the early 13<sup>th</sup> century. The castle is situated on top of an escarpment where the River Wye cuts into a natural glacial gravel ridge. The bailey is a large, flat, trapezoidal area defined by ditches on three sides, to its west is the motte; further west still is the mound-like feature known as the 'Hornwork', of uncertain origin and function, with a flat, triangular summit. The castle was founded by William fitzOsbern, Earl of Herefordshire, between 1067 and 1071, most probably to control traffic into and out of Wales along the upper Wye valley (DB f.183; Coplestone-Crow 2017).

Castle buildings survive above ground in two locations. The main group is on the motte top, where a gatehouse with two towers and a polygonal curtain wall with three towers enclose a small hall or domestic building, most probably a chamber block, and a small courtyard. This group of buildings, which would have presented a multi-lobed, turreted appearance from most directions, is sometimes referred to as a 'shell keep' though this label is misleading and anachronistic. The current consensus is that these buildings were built in a single episode in the early/mid 13<sup>th</sup> century.

#### *The motte-top buildings*

For simplicity of description, this report assumes that the escarpment overlooking the River Wye forms the north side of the castle, whereas it is, more precisely, on the north-west or west-north-west side. Likewise, the report follows the nomenclature of the plan (fig.2) and other documentation prepared by Nick Joyce Ltd, such that the 'hall' occupies the north side of the motte top (actually NNW), the gatehouse is flanked by the NE and E towers; the south side of the motte is protected by the SE and SW towers, and so on.

The motte stands on the west side of the bailey, rising about 5m above it, with its northern side poised on top of and increasing the height of the riverside escarpment. It is conical with a flat top roughly 30 metres across, with a deep ditch on its east side, much lower ground in the natural valley on its south side, and a shallower ditch

on its west side separating it from the so-called hornwork to the west. The motte top is approached over a causeway across the eastern ditch and modern steps cut into the side of the motte.

At the top of the steps up the motte is the gatehouse, which was partly excavated in 1925-28. This has twin D-plan towers flanking the entrance passage, the masonry surviving to a height of roughly two metres. The entrance passage had an inner and an outer arch, each of two orders, with a portcullis groove between the arches.

The gatehouse gives access to a small courtyard, now a grassed open space with a very uneven surface, a product of the ruination of the surrounding structures and, it seems, an un-backfilled excavation trench (see below). The east side of the courtyard is formed by the 'east tower' – the south flanking tower of the gatehouse. A short stretch of masonry connects this with the south-east tower, again a D-shaped bastion accessed via a doorway through the (closed) back of the bastion, with loop window openings facing outwards and along the flanking walls. A further short stretch of exposed masonry links this with the unexcavated earthwork remains of the south-west tower, which appears to have been of similar form – D-plan, with a closed back. Immediately on the north side of the SW tower, the curtain wall survives to something like its full height (c. 8m). It contains the remains of a garderobe (latrine) shaft and chamber at first-floor level at its southern end; this had been accessed from the SW tower.

At the north end of this section of curtain wall stands the NW tower, the only substantially intact tower remaining. This has the remains of three loop window embrasures at ground-floor (motte-top) level, facing north, south, and west; at first-floor level two loop window openings survive, the loops themselves partly surviving, facing north-west and south-west. The joist sockets for the first-floor frame are very clear; a barrel-vaulted passage in the thickness of the curtain wall runs south from the first-floor room to a garderobe chamber, lit via a small window opening into the courtyard.

The north side of the motte top, overlooking the river, is occupied by a small rectangular two-storey building usually described as the hall. Its junction with the NW tower is complicated by the ruination of the tower at this point and by the rebuilding of the west end of the north wall of the hall – an action usually ascribed, reasonably, though without supporting evidence, to the Great Western Railway Company and their need to insure the stability of structures overlooking their track which is cut along the foot of the riverside escarpment on the line of an earlier tramway. The 'hall'/tower junction will be discussed further below.

The south wall of the hall stands less than a metre high, with patches of irregularly coursed small slabby masonry visible beneath the turf. Outside the scope of the repair work reported here it was thought to be (and was proved later by excavation to be) a rebuild of fairly modern date on the line of the original. The north (river-facing) wall of the hall survives almost to former wall-plate height at its eastern end, where it contains a tall pointed-arched window; further west it survives only to just above the first-floor floor level, where there are the spayed reveals of an opening for a fireplace heating the first floor. The east gable wall of the hall survives almost to its full height. At ground-floor level is a large opening that at first sight appears to be a fireplace,

but, having no chimney flue, it must have been a cupboard or a large niche; on its south side is a blocked opening, probably a doorway. At first-floor level in the hall east gable wall, the plane of the wall continues over the line of the south wall, and a single stone projects westwards from it on the line of the (largely missing) interior face of the south (courtyard) wall: this appears to be the springer for a door-arch at first-floor level at the extreme east end of the hall, and presumably represents the main external access to the first-floor space at its 'low' end.

## **Previous investigations on the motte top at Clifford**

The earliest known excavations at Clifford took place in 1925-28 under the site's then new owner, Dr Oscar Trumper of Birmingham, builder of the present house on the north side of the outer bailey. As well as collecting artefacts from the digging of the drain for the house, he had located a mural tower on the south side of the [inner] bailey and 'fairly well defined the outside walls of the bailey, and the towers of the gate-house' in 1925. By 1928 he had made further excavations on the motte top, on the east side of the inner bailey. He found the footings of what was described as an 'annexe building', the wall of which was said to be built off corbels carrying it over a flue or drain, unfilled with earth. Parallel to this (direction not recorded) 2ft 6 ins 'towards the court centre' – presumably west – was another wall, of mortared rounded river cobbles 'apparently of older date' (TWNFC 25, 151; TWNFC 26, 178). There is a strong probability that Dr Trumper's trench was picked up in the 2017 excavation of Trench 4 in the centre of the motte top: the base of the trench was re-excavated as a slot cut through earlier deposits and the line of the trench was seen as a linear earthwork on the present surface.

In 1929 Clifford Castle was visited by the surveyors of the Royal Commission on Ancient and Historical Monuments (RCHM) and they have left the earliest detailed description of the fabric, referred to further below (fig.1). They also noted how far Dr Trumper's excavations had got – which parts of the motte-top buildings had been 'cleared' and their walls revealed. The gatehouse passage and the southern gatehouse bastion (the E tower) had been cleared; the SE tower had been cleared; the SW tower 'had not yet been cleared internally' and the external wall face between the two southern bastions had not been revealed (RCHM 1929 field notes).

In May 1950, Air Commodore Douglas Iron, the new owner, started to clear rubble, saplings and undergrowth on the motte top. During this process, the foundations of towers on the SW and SE angles of the inner bailey were revealed, together with a stretch of walling between them. A search for a well on the motte top was unsuccessful. The following year (autumn 1951) work began revealing the walls of the 'barbican' or outer gate in the outer bailey; the gate passageway was partly cleared in 1952, and excavations were still in progress in 1953 (Iron 1953a and b). Further work has since taken place around the house and its service trenches, but this is outside the scope of the present report.

## The 2017 repairs

### *methodology*

The repairs, by Treasure & Son of Ludlow, comprised the following activities:

- Raking-out joints in vertical masonry faces and re-pointing with lime mortar. This involved scaffolding the whole building where it survives above head-height and the removal of ivy that concealed much of the standing fabric.
- 'Soft capping' the wall tops. This, the laying of a layer of thick turf on the wall-top surfaces as protection from frost damage and erosion, was preceded by the removal of existing vegetation (grass, weeds, shrubs) with its soil mat, and the removal of loose, displaced, stones and soil back to the original core-work or to the coursed stones of the outer faces. The resultant surfaces were cleaned and bonded with lime mortar; in some areas stones were replaced and laid horizontally but battered back from the faces to better enable the wall top to shed rainwater percolating through the turf covering ('rough racking'). Turf was added when the mortar had had time to cure; the scaffolding was then removed.
- Selective replacement of missing stones in damaged areas to increase the stability of the standing structure. In one instance (interior face of the west wall) a small window opening was reinforced with modern materials and its head and reveals partly rebuilt.

These processes were monitored archaeologically. Visits were made periodically or specifically on the advice of/at the request of the contractors. Written notes were made and digital photographs taken by the writer at various stages of the contractors' works.

Before the commencement of the repairs, the earthworks and the castle buildings, with their obscuring vegetation, were recorded digitally in three dimensions by Adam Sandford of Aerial-Cam, who returned in March 2017 to record the newly-exposed wall-tops of the west curtain wall and NW tower. The castle has now, post-works, been re-recorded by the same methods of hand-held and drone-based digital photography.

By far the most revealing and archaeologically-sensitive of the processes undertaken for the building repairs was the 'gardening' preceding the consolidation of the wall-tops and damaged areas of fabric. This was undertaken by the contractors with considerable care, the team developing an archaeological approach leading directly to the principal discoveries reported here on the wall tops of the west curtain wall and NW tower.

### *Earlier phases of repair*

It was evident even before the ivy was removed that there had been previous work on the castle ruins in the form of at least two phases of propping of unstable fabric.

This was evident in the form of recent (2013) timber propping inside the NW tower and its garderobe passage, and in one of the latter's openings; it was also evident from small (20cm sq) columns of mortared stone built up inside openings in the north end of the west curtain wall and in the side and east end walls of the 'hall'. These mini-columns are undated, though probably later-20<sup>th</sup>-century. The investigation, reported below, of the wall tops of the west curtain wall and NW tower have also led to the recognition of a further phase of intervention in the castle fabric.

## **The 2017 watching-brief results**

### *Introduction and phasing overview*

In the course of eight visits to the motte top between January and June 2017, all of the exposed masonry was inspected. Nowhere, other than in two blocked openings in the 'hall', and two probable instances of design-change during building, was there any evidence of sequence: in other words, where it was possible to check, all of the motte-top buildings were constructed as a single phase of work.

This was evident, first, in the internal corners of the curtain walls forming the polygonal enclosure. Each angle was formed in exactly the same way with bonding stones joining each wall plane across the angle, their outer face cut with the requisite c. 130-degree angle and the coursing running through the change in direction. The junction of the interior face of the west curtain wall with the stub of the hall south wall appeared to be of a single build, with stones overlapping alternately and the courses carrying through. The junction of the north and east walls of the hall was similarly of one build, the courses running through. The north wall of the hall also carries a half-round profile string course at the transition between the battered lower part of the wall face and the vertical upper section. Although the hall/tower junction is missing, this string is continued around the top of the base courses of the NW tower, suggesting again a single build. The fabric of the NW tower is, again, integral with the exterior face of the west curtain wall.

***The following description proceeds clockwise around the top of the motte, commencing with the west wall. Figures in brackets e.g. '(62)' refer to the accompanying illustrations.***

### *The west curtain wall: interior (courtyard) face (3-6)*

This is built of the standard material used on the motte top: coursed mortared rubble, mostly flat slab-like material with a fair number of larger stones. The courses carry through the changes in direction of the wall face with stones specifically cut to bond across the angles. The coursing is also continuous with the stub of the south wall of the hall. There are no signs of any different building phases, with the possible exception of a vertical joint from ground level up roughly a metre, between the two angle changes near the southern end of the wall. There are three vertical planes at 130-degree angles, no sign of a plinth course and no offsets. At the north end of the



wall is a doorway into the tower with a segmental arch and vault behind, with large (c.50cm x 15cm) voussoir stones. To the right (north) of the doorway, between it and the similar doorway into the hall range, is a low, damaged, area propped, before repair, by a mortared stone mini-column.

At first-floor level are two damaged openings lighting the garderobe chamber in the thickness of the wall and the first floor of the tower (7, 8).

Neither before repairs nor after scaffolding and de-vegetating, was any evidence seen in the curtain wall of either putlog holes from the initial construction process, or any joist positions, scars or creases that might be indicative of lean-to buildings or other attached timber structures, such as galleries or staircases. Putlog holes were only seen on the inside face of what remains of the hall south wall (31).

#### *The west curtain wall: exterior (west) face*

This c.7m-long section of wall is in bond with the towers at each end and consists of the same slabby coursed rubble used on the inside face. At roughly head height are three garderobe chute openings – a pair towards the north end and a single chute towards the south end. Their heads appear slightly pointed, but this may be secondary (as pointed out by visiting Castle Studies Group members) as the lintel stones appear to have been very crudely bashed into this form having in reality started with simple flat heads.

At the level of the internal garderobe passage there is a very crude hole (16) through the thickness of the wall at the junction of the main wall plane with the NW tower. With no signs of voussoirs or reveal stones inside, it is uncertain (as it was to the RCHM surveyors in 1929) whether this is simply a hole, or a damaged opening.

When the ivy was removed from the exterior face, a fourth garderobe chute-opening measuring 1.23m x 0.5m with a flat lintel was found in the wall, c. 2.5m from its southern end at first-floor level; this subsequently proved to belong to a shaft extending down from the wall top. Where the ivy had been thickest on this wall face, a coat of white render survived patchily, covering the wall face.

#### *The NW tower: exterior (11)*

The NW tower has a battered base which extends up to first-floor level; about half-way up it, roughly at motte-top level, there is an offset. The top of the battered section is marked by the half-round string course, referred to earlier. At motte-top/ground floor level are three large openings, facing north, west and south, representing loop-window embrasures that have lost their reveals and external dressings.

At first-floor level there are two such openings, facing north-west and south-west, and thus filling-in the gaps in the arcs-of-fire from the loop windows below. The upper loop window openings are more complete than those below. The window facing SW has lost most of its dressing stones but the bottom of the loop survives

below sill level (13). The vertical slit terminates with a cusped lobe (15). The window facing NW is complete and appears to have been of the same design, but the cusp is eroded (12,14). In this case, the lower part of the vertical loop is blocked up with small stones set in white mortar. The latter is identical to the render that was found on the outside face of the curtain wall where the ivy growth had been thickest. It appears that the loop had been blocked (or its lower arm with its floor sloping steeply down from floor level had been blocked), within the lifetime of the castle. The cusped lobe form of the arrow-loop terminal is reminiscent of the fish-tail arrow-loops at Kenilworth Castle in early 13<sup>th</sup>-century work.

### *The NW tower: interior and garderobe chamber*

The NW tower is entered at ground-floor level via the doorway through the west wall; the reveals only survive at base-course level. At this level there are window embrasures on three sides, facing roughly north, west and south, all have lost their dressings/loops; they have arched, slightly pointed internal heads, and large crude voussoir stones. About 500mm above the window arches is a row of four damaged joist sockets, representing the supporting beams for the first floor, running west-east.

At first-floor level there are two loop windows. That facing SW has lost its dressings, except below sill level, the window facing NW is more or less intact with a tall, narrow vertical loop. There is a much smaller loop window lighting the space from the courtyard side. The splayed reveals survive inside but are missing from the exterior as are the lintel and sill (8); inside there is a flat lintel with voussoir stones in the core-work above.

In the NE corner of the first-floor space, there is a gap, representing a doorway position into the 'hall' along the inside face of its south wall (33-35). The southern reveal of this doorway survives, and the remains of five thin courses of stones corbelled-out from this plane suggests the position of an arched doorway (34).

From the SE corner of the first-floor space a passage with a simple barrel-vaulted roof 2.2m high extends along the thickness of the curtain wall for 2.35m, terminating in a small garderobe chamber, with its seat (the stone bench survives) and shaft on the west side (10). In the (south) end wall, a few missing stones reveal the next-door garderobe shaft (9). But, from this level, it extends down to the opening in the wall face, but not up – there was no garderobe at a higher level. It appears that, when the wall was constructed, the bottom sections of two shafts were built side-by-side, but that there was a change in design at the time construction got to first-floor level. A fourth garderobe shaft and chute-opening were discovered a few metres to the south when the ivy covering the curtain wall was removed. The chute-opening is at this level, the shaft extending up to the wall top (discussed below), so it is possible that this was the replacement feature.

The garderobe chamber is lit by a small loop window onto the courtyard. The outer dressings are missing, leaving an irregular hole c.1m high x 0.5m wide (7); the splayed reveals survive inside but the sills, head and outer reveals have been removed. The hole at this level in the external wall face at the NW tower/curtain wall junction was investigated, but no sign of reveals, base or head were found, there

was no sign of provision for it in the vaulting, and it appears to simply be a hole, with no original opening in this position.

Over the tops of the window rear-arches the tower masonry was completely plain up to the tops of the walls; there was no sign of a series of joist positions matching those at first-floor level, and it was thought probable that these would have been more or less at the surviving wall-top height, and have been lost via erosion of the topmost internal facing courses; the surviving top courses were however examined minutely for such evidence (26, 27).

#### *The west curtain wall and NW tower: wall tops*

Removal of thick undergrowth from the top of the curtain wall soon disclosed the open garderobe shaft (23), in the middle of the thickness of the wall, c.2.5m from the stub-end of the wall at its junction with the (removed to footings) SW tower. Further careful 'gardening' by the building contractors exposed a flagged surface continuing south for 4.8m from the inside face of the wall of the NW tower to just short of the open garderobe shaft, where the wall top was in a more damaged condition (17, 19-22). This flagged surface, with stone slabs up to c.80cm x 60cm, continued west up to a vertical face of mortared thin slabby stone standing to a maximum height of 0.48m above the flagged surface; it consists of 9-10 thin courses with a white knobbly render, as seen on the outer face of the main wall, in the joints and over the surface of the stones (21, 22). This outer wall was about 0.65m thick; there was no sign of a similar wall inside (on the east side of) the flagged surface, though this side had sustained more damage and the evidence would not have survived. The wall of the NW tower however was very slightly higher than the flagged surface at their junction, suggesting the probability of a doorway and threshold at this point.

The flagged surface was interpreted as an original wall-walk, with a parapet wall on its west (outside) side. An alternative interpretation is that this surface belonged to a passageway in the thickness of the wall which continued upwards for another (third) storey. This is felt to be the less likely explanation as it would make the motte-top buildings unusually tall, despite having an already well-elevated situation.

Further gardening by the contractors on the top of the NW tower walls yielded, as discussed, no evidence of joist positions for a second floor frame or roof structure, but did reveal a similar flagged surface with the remnants of a parapet wall, 0.65m thick, surviving slightly higher, on its outside, the surface flags c. 30cms x 50-70cms bedded in mortar. The wall tops and newly-revealed parapet were cleaned and re-pointed or re-bedded and later turfed over for the soft capping (24, 25).

While 'gardening' on the wall top of the curtain wall, specifically over the flagged surface, the contractors, on their own initiative, recovered a number of artefacts. The team observed that this was the only location where gardening activity produced finds. These were as follows (pottery identifications by Stephanie Ratkai):

- 1 x sherd Hereford A7b medieval (13<sup>th</sup>-15thC) glazed jug
- 1 x sherd feathered slipware, later 17<sup>th</sup>-mid-18thC
- 1 x sherd flowerpot, 19<sup>th</sup>-20thC

- 1 x wire loop dress fitting, 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup>C
- 1 x piece green glass
- 1 x short hand-made nail
- 1 x oyster shell fragment
- 5 x ceramic building material fragments
- 6 x small animal bones

There is no obvious explanation of how this small group of artefacts came to be where they were found, on an inaccessible wall top several metres above ground level, unless they had been imported into that particular setting. The date-range of the pottery sherds, together with the composition of the rest of the assemblage, all small pieces, is very suggestive of residual finds imported in a quantity of topsoil obtained in the immediate vicinity. The most plausible explanation for their presence on the wall top is that soil was deliberately taken up there, either as part of a planting scheme or as a previous, unrecorded, attempt at soft capping. Either way, it points to an interventionary phase in the history of the fabric that is otherwise unknown.

#### *The west end of the hall and its junction with the NW tower*

Figure 31 shows this area before repairs started. The westernmost end of the 'hall' south (courtyard) wall survives to roughly the same height as the NW tower, with which it is in bond. In this surviving section the first-floor level is evident from joist positions; the doorway from the first-floor chamber in the tower, alongside the south wall, has already been described (above). Below it, there is a ground-floor doorway from the courtyard to a space that, prior to 2017, could only be said to be outside the ruined end wall of the hall undercroft space (not shown on the plan fig.1). Excavation of a trench across this area in September 2017 (32) showed that the doorway led from the courtyard into a passage between the undercroft end wall and a second, outside wall, that was the true exterior west end wall of the 'hall' building, joined to the – subsequently truncated – north wall of the hall. The passage was clearly barrel-vaulted as the voussoir stones over the doorway from the courtyard protrude (northwards) well beyond the plane of the inside face of the south wall (35). Where excavated, no trace remained of the original passage floor level, both the undercroft end-wall and the exterior wall having been robbed down to footing level (32). Above the vaulted passage, the first floor would have continued over the passage, up to the external wall: the hall was therefore a couple of metres longer than the undercroft space beneath it. The passage between the walls may simply have given access to the undercroft via a doorway; more likely it also gave access to a garderobe chamber or loop window. However, with the end walls severely robbed and the north wall truncated (probably by the railway company), the evidence does not survive.

#### *The 'hall': north wall*

The most complete components of the building traditionally referred to as the hall are its north wall and east gable wall (36-42). As already described, the north (exterior) face consists of a vertical wall rising from a half-round string course marking the ground-first-floor transition, and the end of the battered and stepped base courses (39). The interior face of the north wall is completely plain at present ground level (36, 37), what was presumably undercroft level, below the principal heated room, in

the original arrangement; above, a series of joist positions (with matching positions in the surviving stub of the opposite/south wall) and an offset or shelf mark the former first floor. Towards the east end are the remains of a large window with a flattish pointed arch; it has lost its dressing stones but appears to have been of late medieval, probably four-centred type (36). It has splayed reveals. On its west side is a previously unknown fireplace position (38). The hearth was found when the loose material was removed from the wall top, and coincides with a feature on the outside face of the wall. This is a panel of masonry, separated from the surrounding masonry by straight joints, at the top of which on the east side only is a single projecting corbel. Although the panel looks like a blocked doorway, such a feature would make little sense in this position and the lone corbel is anomalous. The most probable explanation is that the back of the fireplace was intended to be corbelled out from the wall face, but a design change meant that it was built flush instead.

### *The 'hall': east gable wall and the south courtyard wall*

The east gable wall survives almost as high as the north wall, with a flat top (40). At present ground level there are two openings. Roughly central is a wide niche or cupboard with a flat top; it presumably had a lintel though this is missing. Although appearing to be a fireplace, it was no such thing as its roof is solid core-work with no flue extending up. When restoration began it was propped by one of the mortared stone mini-columns seen elsewhere in the motte-top buildings. To its immediate right (south) there is evidence of another wide opening, but blocked, and this is likely to have been a doorway. A horizontal crease above marks the position of the first floor. At its north end, alongside the continuing face of the north wall, what is now a gap without dressing stones represents an original doorway position from the main first-floor space into the irregular chamber beyond (east) in the angle formed with the curtain wall and gatehouse. At first floor-level the main plane of the gable wall continues over the line of the inner face of the south (courtyard) wall. This, and a stone projecting from the wall face in this location, shows that this was a doorway position, fairly certainly the main access to the principal living space from the courtyard – either from an external staircase or from an unknown attached building range.

The stub of the south wall survives at the west end of the hall; its inside face (31) will be discussed further below but, in brief, contains the remains of the doorway into the first floor of the NW tower and joist positions marking the first floor of the 'hall' building. At ground level is a broad rectangular recess, propped by a stone mini-column that appears to have been some kind of niche or cupboard, with a counterpart in the east end wall and quite possibly further along the south wall.

The remainder of the south wall is ruined, its grassed remains standing no more than a metre high at most. Where visible much of the wall fabric is drystone flat slabby material, not at all well built and very suggestive of a limited-scope reconstruction episode.

Its outer face and core-work were excavated at two points in September 2017 to establish what of its remains was original fabric, and whether there had been a doorway in an existing gap towards the east end. The latter question was investigated by 2017 trench 2 (43). This found that the gap was caused by the

ruination of the wall where there had been an internal niche or cupboard, similar to those identified in the (standing) west end of the south wall, and in the east gable wall. The trench exposed its eastern reveal, and that its back wall had been destroyed down to present courtyard ground level, thus creating a gap. Trench 3 (44) exposed an original doorway position in the centre of the south wall.

### *The gatehouse and mural towers*

As far as is known the spaces between the east end of the hall and the gatehouse passage were never excavated, though the condition of this part of the site when work began in 2017, and its appearance c.1929 as shown by the RCHM plan, suggests that the owner at that time, Dr Oswald Trumper, had at least 'cleared' the interior of the room on the N side of the gatehouse (the NE tower). The 2017 work re-revealed the tower interior wall faces and its SE-facing window position (45-48).

Similarly, Dr Trumper had had the gatehouse passage cleared by 1929 and the details of its inner and outer arches and intervening portcullis slot were recorded by the Royal Commission (49-54). The 2017 work removed the debris and vegetation that had accumulated in the ensuing ninety or so years, though no new observations have been made.

The East tower (55-57), on the south side of the gatehouse, was better preserved than the NE tower on the opposite side, its west wall standing to head height, with partly surviving render on its face (57). The 2017 work clarified the position of the NE-facing and SE-facing window positions, the latter being unclear to the RCHM surveyors.

Vegetation-removal and consolidation work on the inside face of the curtain wall between the E tower and the doorway into the SE found, right on the edge of the de-turfed area, a possible upper plane to the wall set back from (i.e. south of) the plane of the wall at present ground level; this could not be confirmed as the exposure was too limited (a couple of stones only).

Again, the SE tower was returned in 2017 to the state it had been in (with some subsequent erosion) in the late 1920s following its first clearance (58-61), though at that time it was neither consolidated (as far as is known) nor weather-proofed. In this case the south-facing window position shown accurately on the RCHM plan (fig.1) is now identifiable only as a damaged, particularly low area, in the wall fabric (60).

## Discussion and conclusions

### *Dating and sequence*

The 2017 architectural work did not produce any instantly-identifiable more accurate dating evidence than has been available to past writers on Clifford. The one possible exception to this is the form of the first-floor arrow loop in the NW tower (see fig. 15), where further research and close knowledge of comparable sites may produce a date more specific than the early 13<sup>th</sup> century. The consensus among visiting members of the Castle Studies Group was that the buildings were likely to be the work of Walter Clifford III (d. 1263) rather than his father, Walter Clifford II, who was Sheriff of Herefordshire in 1198/9. Walter Clifford III was recorded as being deeply in debt to Ursell the Jew in 1233, for 1000 marks/£600 a sum that could well be attributable to expensive building works (Coplestone-Crow 2017). One of the conclusions of observations made during the 2017 work is, however, that all the buildings are of one phase of construction.

### *The 'hall' and its use*

The domestic accommodation seen on the motte top was at first-floor level in relation to the interior, heated by a wall fireplace and lit through the side walls, and perhaps the west end wall, by large windows. There was access to a chamber at each end; at the west end the chamber was in the NW tower, which was provided with a garderobe/latrine. External access was via a door in the SE corner alongside the east end wall. The building has traditionally been referred to as the 'hall' and shows some hall-like characteristics, with external access at the low/east end and higher status accommodation at the upper/west end. However, with an internal floor plan of (very approximately) 11m by 5m, the building is tiny by the standards of wealthy halls (the Bishop's was c.30m x 17m). And with no central hearth, it is unlikely to have been a ceremonial hall, in the accepted sense, used by Walter Clifford. Such a building may well be present in the castle, but in the outer bailey. It is probably more accurately regarded as a chamber block, either associated with a building in the bailey, or with an adjoining ground-floor hall on the motte top – though this is something that only area excavation or substantial trenches would show. The building might, with or without a hall, have been used by a known official – the Constable of the Castle. At Clifford, probably before 1236, this was one Adam or Alan the Irishman, who may or may not be the same person as Alan the Crossbowman (Coplestone-Crow 2017)

### *Was the castle militarily effective?*

This is a much larger question than can be answered from an analysis of the motte-top buildings alone, involving unresolved issues such as the function of the so-called hornwork to the west of the motte, and the reality of the apparent rebuilding in stone of only part of the outer bailey. Nevertheless, the impression gained from the surviving fragments was that they do indeed represent a serious fortification and were not merely a vehicle for advertising the lordly status of the Cliffords. This is apparent in the disposition of the window openings with overlapping arcs-of-fire at two levels in the only surviving tower, and in the design of their loops with their steeply-downwardly-inclined floors, and enlarged (crossbow-friendly) terminals. A

professional crossbowman appears as Constable in the early 13<sup>th</sup> century, and conceivably advised on the construction. The multiplicity of mural towers can be seen as the logical outcome of requiring covering fire all along the base of a tightly curving perimeter wall. Ron Shoemith (2016, 52-4) has drawn attention to this design in the context of Hereford Castle and, a possible progenitor, Chateau Gaillard.

### **The archaeological methodology; ‘wall-top archaeology’**

One of the most interesting aspects of the 2017 was the exposure of the extremely fragile and vulnerable remains of the apparent wall-walk and parapet wall base on the curtain wall and NW tower. These remains were fragmentary, and a less observant approach to the pre-consolidation ‘gardening’ process by the contractors could easily have led to their loss. And may well have done so on many other monuments. In addition to the recovery of original fabric, there is also the issue of soil imported onto the wall top. There seems no other way of accounting for pottery and assorted finds in this location, other than via the importation of soil. The writer has experience of only one other site where a similar process was apparent from the archaeology. At the medieval gatehouse of Rushall Hall, near Walsall, the ruined first floor, over the archway, was found to have been turned into a garden with tons of imported soil. An adjacent garderobe chamber had been turned into a grotto by covering its interior with sea-shell-studded render. These spaces were, however, easily accessed from ground level (Baker 1981-2). This was not the case at Clifford, which makes it more likely that soil was brought up for a planting scheme. Dr Trumper must be in the frame for this, as the first owner to live on site since the castle was inhabited, though the RCHM photographs taken in 1929 show only weed-growth and perhaps a small tree. Further research and perhaps a search of other early photographs may clarify this issue.



## Further work and archiving

The September 2017 excavations, funded by the Castle Studies Trust, will be the subject of a separate report in the near future.

Archiving arrangements and publication will be according to Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA), Standard and guidance for the creation, compilation, transfer and deposition of archaeological archives, RCAHMW Guidelines for Digital Archaeological Archives and will be available through the Archaeological Data Service (ADS).

Archives for this project will be deposited with the Herefordshire Historic Environment Record.

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