PENDRAGON CASTLE

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY REPORT

Mark Bowden and Amy Lax

© RCHME Crown Copyright

1993

Pendragon Castle **NY 70 SE 2**

CUMBRIA EDEN MALLERSTANG

Introduction

The remains of Pendragon Castle (NY 7817 0264) and its associated earthworks were surveyed in November 1993 as part of the Howgill Fells Project (phase II), following Level 1-2 recording the previous August. The survey, at 1:1000 scale, was carried out using a Wild TC1610 total station and plane table.

Location and Topography

Pendragon Castle is situated on the W side of the Mallerstang Valley, 6 km S of Kirkby Stephen and 10km N of Garsdale Head. The castle occupies a defensive position, commanding good views up and down the narrow valley. At this point the valley floor is less than 0.5 km wide; to the E it is bounded by Mallerstang Edge which rises to over 600 m, and to the W by the slightly gentler slopes descending from Wild Boar Fell and The Nab. To the N of the castle the valley begins to widen out, offering a strategically less desirable location.

The castle itself is actually a square tower house within a partial ringwork constructed upon an elevated spur of land, 250m OD, on the E bank of the River Eden. To the N and S of the castle the ground drops away to low-lying, marshy ground, landscaped by previous action of the river. On the W side of the river a high terrace overlooks the minimal flood plain.

The present remains are mostly confined to two fields S of Castle Bridge, between the river and the road. Part of the field inside the fork of the B6259 was included in the survey since it included a pond probably utilised by the occupants of the castle. The fields to the E, between Pendragon and the hamlet of Castlethwaite, and also those to the S of the castle, have evidently been intensively ploughed and contain no earthworks.

In addition to the tower house and ringwork there are a number of other earthworks surviving including the remains of a range of buildings to the N-W, trackways and excavation trenches. A possible prospect mound was noted on the W bank of the river, opposite the castle.

Archaeological history of the castle

Pendragon castle is first mentioned in 1228 (Pat. Rolls ii, 176) by which date it was evidently well established. In 1309 Robert de Clifford was granted a licence to crenellate (Cal.

Chancery Warrants i, 291). The "castle of Pendragun and the chace of Malrestang" are noted in the Fine Rolls of 1323 (Vol iii, 221). Curwen (1913) notes two occasions on which the castle was supposedly burnt down by the Scots, in 1341 and 1541, but does not give any references; probably it is Nicholls (1883). According to Leland, who visited in 1539 (in King 1983, 496), the castle was already in ruins. Restoration of Pendragon was begun in 1660 by Lady Anne Clifford. According to her diaries (Williamson 1967, 434) she also built a wall around the castle, enclosing approximately 90 roods (22 acres), and inside built a stable, coach house, brew-house, bake-house and wash house. This range of ancillary buildings is portrayed in the foreground of the Bucks' painting of 1736 (rep. PSAN 1908 opp. 260). Anne Clifford probably also built Castle Bridge in 1662. After her death in about 1675 the castle was apparently abandoned and left to ruin. Curwen (1908, 260) says that in 1685 the castle was "ruthlessly destroyed by Thomas, earl of Thanet" but this contradicts the evidence of Bucks' view, in which the tower is standing to almost full height.

The Castle and Earthworks

The tower house, measuring 19.5 m square externally, is N-facing with a single entrance. A gardrobe tower projecting from the S-W angle is a later addition. Originally the tower was three storeys high. In the walls are vaulted mural chambers, a good example surviving on the first floor of the W wall. A detailed description of the architecture is given in the RCHME Inventory of Westmorland (1936, 163-4).

The interior of the tower house is now largely filled with rubble from the collapse of the walls. Externally, the N-W quarter and the E wall are also obscured by large piles of debris up to 1.5 m high, now partly turf-covered. Photographic evidence (Curwen 1913, pl. opp. 124; RCHME 1936, pl. 141) shows that in 1913 the E wall of the tower house was standing approximately 50% higher than its present maximum height. A large portion of the wall had collapsed by 1936. The debris around the exterior of the tower house was much greater in 1936 than at present; much has since been cleared by the owner, Mr E R P Frankland, who has retrieved the moulded stones.

The internal diameter of the ringwork is approximately 54 m, within which the tower house is situated slightly to the W. The ringwork is defined on the N and E sides by a deep ditch and on its S-W side by a steep scarp, 10 m high. The S-W scarp of the knoll is sheer and has a smoothed appearance, probably as a result of pushing out the edge of the natural scarp towards the river in order to create a circular enclosed area and a more defensive position. The interior of the ringwork is flat, without the inner bank that one might expect of such an earthwork, and is between 1.1 m and 2.1 m higher than the top of the counterscarp of the ditch. Even allowing for the natural rise of the land, it is clear that the interior has

been artificially heightened with material from the ditches, possibly by levelling or infilling an earlier ringwork to create a more motte-like structure.

The ditch, interrupted by two causeways, is a maximum of 14.5 m wide along the N section. A well worn sheep track at the E end of the N section has caused some mutilation of the counterscarp. The internal scarp is 4.8 m high and the counterscarp 2.65m high. The S-E quadrant of the ditch, 10 m wide at its narrowest point, gradually broadens to a maximum of 18.5 m. Within this section of the ditch is a step in the bottom, 1.7 m high. This anomaly within the ditch is situated beside an old excavation trench (a) which at first sight suggests that spoil from the trench has simply been cast into the ditch. However, the relatively small size and depth of (a) suggests that it alone cannot account for the size of the step.

There are two causeways across the ditch, one to the N-W and another to the E. The N-W causeway is 3.7 m wide, the E causeway is 8.6 m wide. Although it is not unknown for a ringwork to have two entrances, differences between the causeways makes it unlikely that they are contemporary. The narrow N-W causeway is part of a direct route to the remains of the range of buildings built by Anne Clifford (f), via two trackways (T1 & T2), suggesting that this causeway was a later addition for local convenience. The wider, E entrance is clearly located most conveniently in terms of communication, beside the main route up and down the valley.

There are two trenches (a & b) that cut the counterscarp of the ditch which have the appearance of excavation trenches and are probably contemporary. The object of interest in both cases appears to be earthworks on either side of the E causeway. (a), situated S of the causeway, is approximately 9 m long and 2 m wide internally, with banks of upcast on either side a maximum of 2 m wide and 0.6 m high internally.

The second excavation trench (b), partly cut into the counterscarp, is of minimal depth and is only 2 m wide. It appears to be an investigation of one of two subrectangular scoops measuring 6.3 m by 4 m and 5 m by 4 m, that reach a maximum depth of 1.2 m. These two scoops are separated by a flat-topped knoll, 3.2 m by 2.2 m. The earlier earthworks are overlain by the stone field wall.

Cut into the natural slope N of the castle, adjacent to the field wall, are two circular scoops (c). The smaller measures 5 m in diameter and has a maximum depth of 0.5 m, while the larger is 8.7 m by 4.9 m and is 2.5 m deep, looking upslope. There is little upcast and the most likely explanation is that they represent minor surface quarrying. There is no continuation of the earthworks on the other side of the field wall; they are probably a late feature.

On the level ground N of the castle is a small L-shaped scarp

(d), 5.7 m long overall and 3.3 m wide. It reaches a maximum height of 0.25 m and is stony suggesting the remains of a building. Immediately to the W of this is a west-facing lynchet 1.2 m wide, 0.3 m high. It is visible up to the field wall but cannot be seen beyond. The S end is stony and may be part of (d).

At the base of the N-facing, natural slope is a circular earthwork (e), possibly a corn-drying kiln or similar structure. Alternatively this may be the remains of a well which is marked on the Ordnance Survey 1:2500 map about 15m N-E of (e). Internally, between the two lips of the scarps, it measures 5.3 m and transversely 4.7 m. The outer scarps are 1.2 m and 1.8 m wide. The entrance is 1.1 m wide and the maximum height, internally, is 1.3 m. The banks contain stone.

To the N-W of the castle, is an area of low-lying and marshy ground formerly known as the Cocklake. Beside this area are the most impressive earthwork remains outside the defences, a line of adjoining buildings (f) oriented N-S. The documentary evidence available makes it almost certain that this is the range of building provided by Lady Anne Clifford when she restored the castle in 1660. Bucks' view of 1736 (PSAN 1908, opp. 260) shows the roofless buildings in some detail. The range is divided into two buildings built almost end to end. The northern building is shown with both gables still standing and has four buttresses supporting its W wall, the positions of which are still visible on the stonework. In addition, the gable end of a separate building facing N-W is visible behind this but does not correspond to any of the visible earthworks.

A stone field wall, 0.75 m wide, now utilises the entire W wall of the range for part of its length, although it has been subject to rebuilding. A roofed field barn, still in use, overlies part of the range. There is an entrance in its W wall, marked externally by a recently added wing wall, 0.3 m high. Towards the N end of the E wall is another doorway, now blocked and in the S wall is a window of re-used moulded stones. The short walls of the barn are butted against the W wall.

The character of the W wall is different on either side of the barn. To the south of the barn it is in a state of collapse, standing to an average height of about 0.8 m. In contrast the stretch of wall to the N is far better preserved and is up to 2.6 m high; the present owner stated that this was due to rebuilding carried out within the last few years.

Another field wall leads from the S-E corner of the barn; on the N side of this is a mound of rubble and on the S side a turf-covered mound reaching approximately 2.4 m up the side of the barn. It is possible that the large amount of debris at this point is caused by the collapse of the two gable ends in close proximity.

At least five separate rooms can be identified within the range and more can be assumed to lie under the barn and the adjacent turf mound. The northernmost room is the longest and its full extent may be partially obscured by the barn. It measures 5.7 m by 14 m minimum internally, with banks 1.3 m wide and an average of 0.5 m high. The N bank is up to 1m high and is very stony. In its centre is an entrance 1.2 m wide. The southern end of the S bank is slightly mutilated by traffic from the blocked entrance of the field barn. South of the barn are the remains of four much smaller rooms, the first of which is the least distinct. It is visible as a low subrectangular depression 3.1 m by 4.8 m. The adjoining room to the S is 7.2 m long and 2 m wide. The S wall survives mainly as an earthwork, 4.2 m wide and 1.1 m high but one or two facing stones protrude. The S wall of the next chamber displays both faces along the top of the earthwork enabling precise measurements. From wall to wall it is 7.55 m by 4.9 m. The earthwork bank around the wall is 2.5 m overall, 0.7 m high and the wall is 0.65 m wide. A very slight scarp defines the S edge of the room. The final room is 2.1 m internally, the S bank measuring 2.4 m by 7.5 m. The bank is 0.4 m high externally and 0.6 m high internally.

All the banks are stony and those surviving to the greatest height are situated furthest from the field barn suggesting that these structures have been robbed of stone to build the barn. A peculiarity of all the buildings in the range is either the total absence of anything resembling an E wall, or the low foundation levels of the E wall compared to other remaining walls in the building. One possible explanation for this is that the buildings were timber fronted resting on low footings. It is uncertain what function each individual room performed but it seems reasonable to suggest that the stables or coachhouse would have required a large building.

Trackways

Two trackways lead from the range of buildings to the castle via the N-W causeway. The wider and longer of the two (T1) is a maximum of 5 m wide and is defined on its E side by a scarp 0.55 m high maximum. A much smaller track (T2), leading from the southern end of the range, joins the former at the causeway. It climbs steeply up the slope, is a maximum of 3.5 m wide, and has the appearance of a short cut away from the main route. Another trackway (T3), continues S from in front of the range, skirting the bottom of the ringwork is a maximum of 3.0m wide and shows signs of recent use by farm vehicles.

A small trackway (T4) in the N field extends from the base of the slope up to the S-E corner of the field. It is overlain by the field wall and must thus predate the present field pattern. Beyond the S-E corner of the field the route of the modern road S seems to be following the expected course of (T4) for a little way. The track is between 1.3 m and 1.8 m wide and

reaches a maximum depth of 0.4 m.

Another trackway (T5) appears to be a continuation of an earlier form of the road to Kirkby Stephen. From the junction of the present roads, beside the E causeway, the trackway follows the curve of the castle ditch, downslope, until it fades in the marshy area below. The width of the track varies between 3.4 m and 1.8 m. A bank flanking the road to the E measures 3.1 m wide overall and reaches a maximum height of 0.2 m.

Castle Bridge

Castle Bridge, which crosses the river 150 m N of the castle, is said to have been built in 1662 during the period of restoration by Anne Clifford. A single span bridge with a segmental arch, the original structure has been subsequently doubled in width.

The site of the bridge is not a naturally shallow spot; the most likely position of the ford which must have predated the bridge is about 300 m upstream where the river broadens and shallows. Trackway (T5) appears to lead in this general direction.

The West River Bank

Opposite the castle, on the W side of the River Eden are a number of small earthworks (NAR No. NY 70 SE 24*). The most prominent of these is a subrectangular ditch, 18 m by 5.5 m, 0.9 m deep, which is probably the source of earth for a roughly semi-circular platform (g) projecting from the high natural scarp above the flood plain of the river. The top of the platform is now 6.4 m long and 2.7 m wide but it may be that part of the earthwork has slipped away. The platform is overlain by an old hedge bank and ditch extending N-S along the top of the scarp. Another field bank, probably contemporary, and ditch extends S-W from the N tip of the rectangular ditch. Since this small platform is overlooked by the tower house, it is unlikely to be a gun emplacement or other minor siegework. Given the good view of the platform from the tower house and Anne Clifford's record for building gardens it is possible that it represents some form of prospect mound or ornamental foundation. The low curving scarps to the S-W are probably surface quarrying, of uncertain date.

The Cocklake Pond

In the field N-E of the road are earthworks which may also relate to later landscaping. The field takes in part of the flood plain of the river; the ground is wet and numerous modern field drains score its surface. Running parallel to the high,

natural scarp is a much lower scarp that can be seen continuing beyond the road and doubling back. This essentially natural slope, probably an old river bed, forms a pond (h) in wet weather and may have been accentuated in order to create a more permanent landscape feature. Presumably before the bridge was built and subsequently the connecting road to the castle, the pond was continuous with the Cocklake.

Bibliography

Curwen J F 1913 Castles and Fortified Towers of Cumberland, Westmorland and Lancashire North of the Sands CW Extra Series 13. Titus Wilson. Kendal

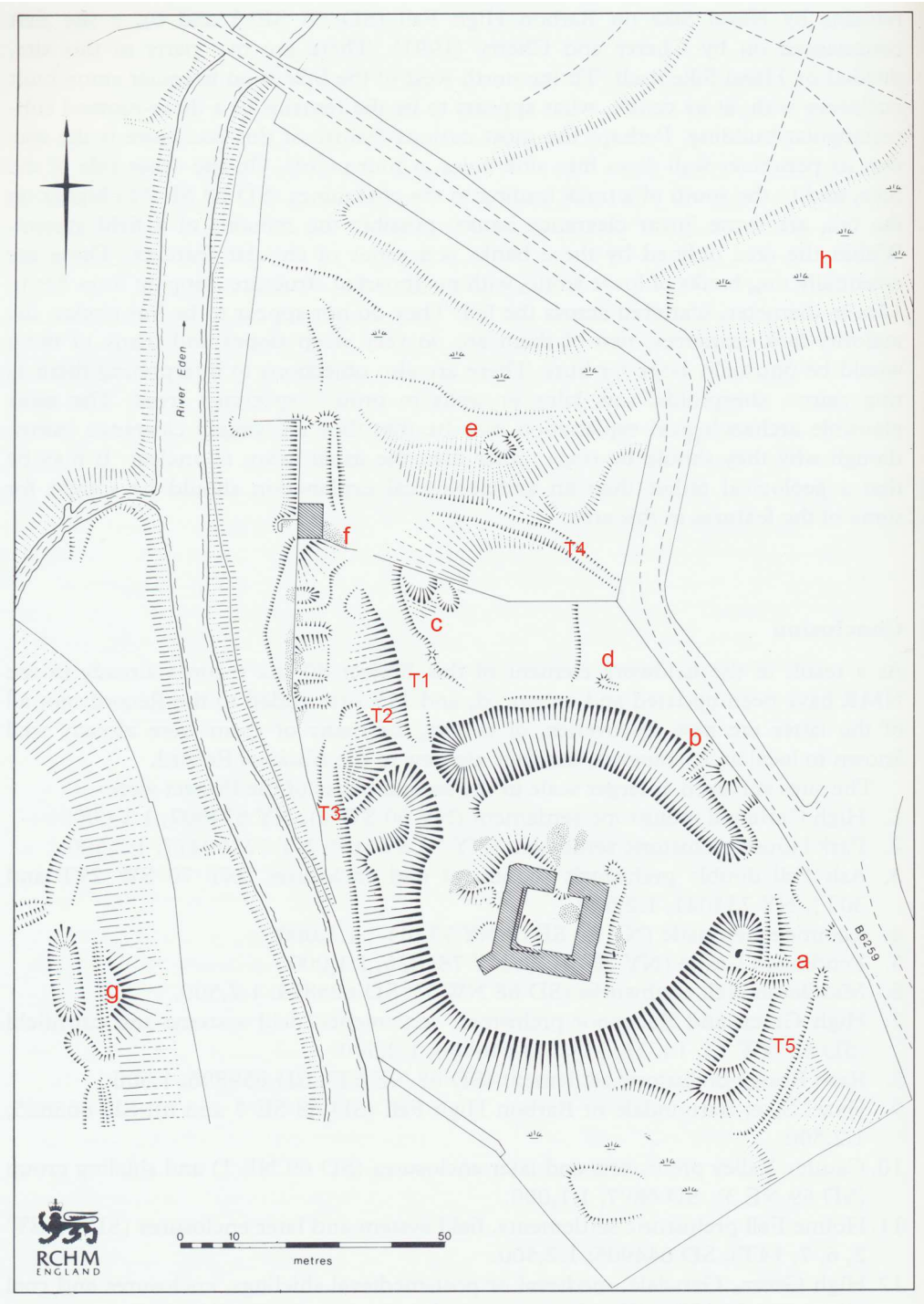
Proc Soc Ant Newcastle 1908 Kirkby Stephen Church; and Pendragon Castle, Westmorland (260-5). Newcastle.

RCHME 1936 An Inventory of the Historical Monuments in Westmorland (163-4). HMSO. London.

King D J C 1983 Castellarium Anglicanum Kraus. New York.

Nicholls W 1883 The History and Traditions of Mallerstang Forest and Pendragon Castle Heywood. Manchester.

Williamson G C 1967 (2nd Ed) Lady Anne Clifford Titus Wilson. Kendal.



Pendragon Castle survey plan (reduced) ©RCHME Crown copyright