



Drawn by Geo. Bailey, 1896

MACKWORTH CASTLE.

Mackworth Castle.¹

By GEORGE BAILEY.



THE best time to see this fine old relic of ages long past is in the evening when the sun is setting over the west, and the old turrets and battlements catch the golden-tinted light. Probably most Derby people have taken this pleasant walk to Mackworth, and have stood and mused and wondered and departed; but not many are aware that this picturesque gatehouse carries the mind back to the time of the Plantagenet kings, when Edward III. was reigning, while his son Edward, the Black Prince, was busy fighting in France, and gaining victories at Crecy and Poitiers. It was at the latter that James, Lord Audley, with his four esquires—Delvas, Mackworth, Hawkestone, and Foulshurst—did such valorous deeds, that, after the battle was over, he was highly commended by Edward, the Black Prince, who, to mark his high estimation of his valour, bestowed upon him “500 marks of yearly revenues.” On being carried back to his tent, however—for he had been severely wounded—he called together his esquires, and in the presence of his brother, Sir Peter, and five others, he made over the 500 marks as a gift to his four esquires and their heirs for ever.² Nicholas, son of the above Lord Audley, was the last of his line, for he died in 1392, *s.p.*

In 1405 John Touchet, grandson of his sister Joan, was summoned to Parliament as Baron Audley, and from him descended

¹ A Paper read at the Annual Meeting, 15th June, though somewhat abridged.

² That Mackworth was one of the four is doubted by some.

a long line, which ended in the death of John, eighteenth Baron Audley, 1777. The Touchets were Norman, and their name occurs in the rolls of Battle Abbey and the Norman Chronicles. They appear to have held Marton, or Markeaton, at an early date. In the year 1251, Thomas, son of Robert Tuschet, had a charter of free warren there. The Touchets claimed a park at Markeaton and a gallows for the execution of criminals in 1330. In or about the year 1576 John Touchet, Lord Audley, sold the manors of Markeaton and Mackworth to John Mundy.¹ The Mackworths, though they never owned the manor, appear to have possessed a considerable estate there, a portion of which was given to John Mackworth, clerk, by John Touchet, Lord Audley, in 1406. Thomas Mackworth, his younger brother, was the ancestor of the subsequent generations. A history of the family and their connection with the castle is set forth in detail by the late Rev. Charles Kerry in vol. xi., page 1, of this *Journal*. There is also a pretty etching of the castle by the late F. G. Robinson. In this article the original Deed of Conveyance, dated 16th June, 1655, is given in full, by which the estate passed from Sir Thomas Mackworth, Bart., to Sir John Curzon, ancestor of Lord Scarsdale, the present owner. At that time the mansion house had already become a ruin.

The only way of accounting for the singular fact that this beautiful old gatehouse is all that remains, is that a castle never existed, but only one of the rambling old half-timber mansions, of which several still exist, and there is good reason for this conjecture, because of the considerable evidences in the adjoining field of there having been large buildings, in two blocks, which were roughly measured. The first block seen on entering the field was 118 ft. by 51 ft., and the other adjoining it 115 ft. by 96 ft.—in both cases these figures refer to the north and west sides only. The Rev. C. Kerry thought these areas were courts; but this can scarcely have been so, because there are indications that a building of large extent once stood there,

¹ Lysons' *Derbyshire*, page 203.

and from the fact that the manor house of the Touchets at Markeaton was a structure of wood and plaster, which was taken down in 1750,¹ when the present house was built, it may fairly be assumed that the house at Mackworth was of the same kind, and this would account for its entire disappearance, when it is remembered that for the long period of two hundred years it had been forsaken by its owners, and thus fell to decay, as so many others have done. Now as to the present structure, which remains in such good condition, it may be said that it could never have been part of a fortified castle; the walls are of no strength, and it is in such a position that it could easily have been destroyed by a very small force armed even with the small weapons then in use, so that any idea of its ever being intended for defensive purposes is untenable. But while the more ancient and less substantial fabric has vanished this more substantial one has remained. Of course, the redoubtable Cromwell and Sir John Gell are credited with its destruction, but it shows no signs of ill-usage of that kind; moreover, it is very doubtful if the Mackworths of that day were opposed to the Parliament.

The building as it now stands may be described as having been a castellated gatehouse or entrance to the grounds of the mansion-house, which stood to the west of it, and the style of architecture is that of the fifteenth century—Perpendicular. The design is good, and so is the workmanship and proportions. The arch in the centre is a segmental one, decorated with a crocketed moulding, which rises into the ogee form, with a finial in the centre. There are buttresses on each side of the gateway, and also at each angle of the building. From these latter rise round turrets, which are embattled, and rise considerably above the embattled parapet of the general fabric. There are three square-headed windows in the front, and one at the east end of the upper room, each with mullions and transoms, and cusped foliage in the heads. In the lower west side there is an arrow slit, and above there is a flat projection for the chimney of the upper room, in which there is a small hooded

¹ Hutton's *Derbyshire*.

fireplace. The chimney shaft rises above the parapet and has an embattled cover, the apertures for the smoke being in the sides. There are three gargoyles representing animals to carry the rain-water from the roof, which, if it was not flat, could have been but of very slight pitch. The room was very narrow, as there are only three embrasures in the end parapets, while there are eight in the front. The floor of the room must have been of wood. There were small rooms on each side the arch on the ground floor, one of which must have afforded some means of ascent to the room above, but there are no remains of walls or anything to show how the side at the back was finished, whether by another arch or simply by a square opening through the wall. So the matter ends there.

It is pleasant to find that every care has been taken to keep this interesting relic in good repair by the present proprietor, Lord Scarsdale, in whose family it has been since 1655.