

THE MOATED HOMESTEAD, CHURCH, & CASTLE OF BODIAM.

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FEW English castles have been more thoroughly studied or more extensively written about than Bodiam. George T. Clark, in the Preface to his work on *Medieval Military Architecture*, claimed that his paper on Caerphilly Castle, drawn up in 1834, was "the first attempt to treat, in a scientific and accurate manner, the plans and details of a great medieval fortress"¹; yet already in 1831 William Cotton had published his *Graphic and Historical Sketch of Bodyam Castle in Sussex*, in which he included an exceedingly good and careful description of the building, with a competent ground plan. From that time onwards a long line of expert investigators, alike on the historical and on the constructional side, have devoted their attention to Bodiam; and the series of treatises on the subject culminates in the sumptuous volume² dedicated by the late Marquis Curzon to the beautiful Sussex castle which he bought, repaired, and at his death left to the nation—surely not the least among the many services rendered to his country in so remarkably wide a range of capacities.

Perhaps it may be thought that in the case of a building which has been the subject of so much research little is left to be gathered up by a new worker. In the course of his general description of the ruins, Lord Curzon, with classic beauty of diction, has in fact

¹ *Medieval Military Architecture in England*, 1884, Vol. I., p. vii.

² *Bodiam Castle, Sussex: A Historical and Descriptive Survey by the Marquis Curzon of Kedleston, K.G., Owner of the Castle*, 1926.

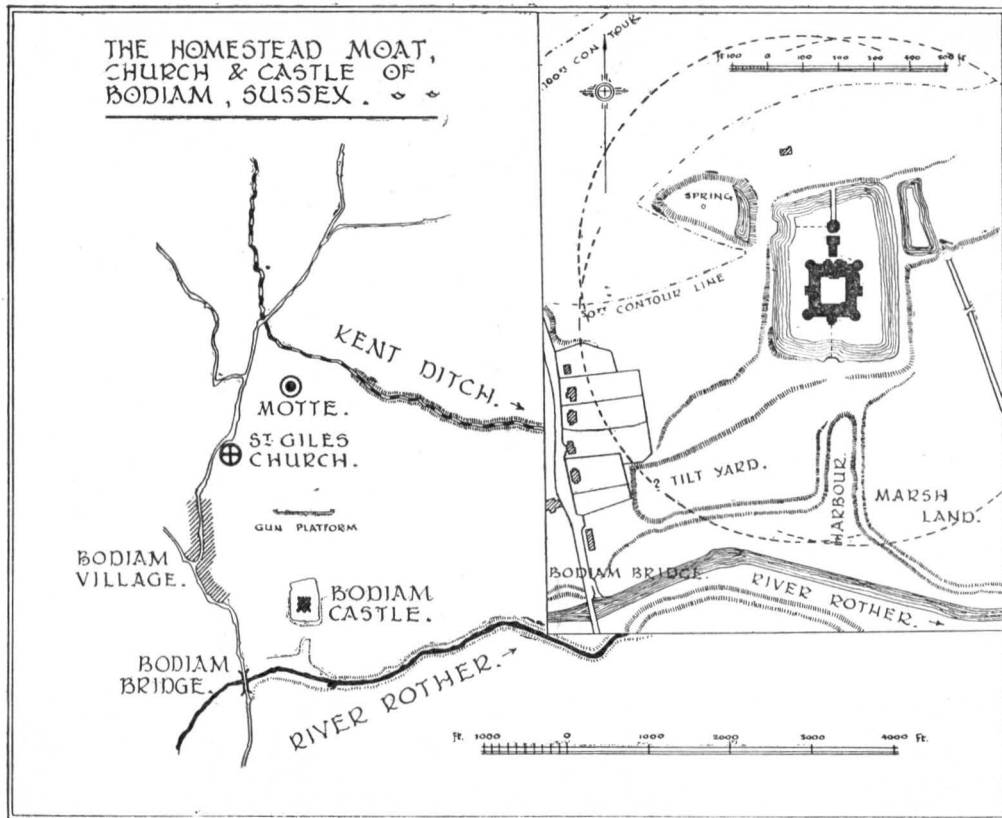


FIG. 1. BODIAM: MAP OF MANORIAL SITES, AND PLAN OF CASTLE.

[J. F. Wynders, del.]

assembled pretty nearly everything of importance in previous accounts; besides contributing very notably to the elucidation of various problems by his own intensive study, and, in particular, by the excavation which he conducted in the bed of the moat and at various places within the castle area. But Lord Curzon died before any part of his book had been set up in type, and the result inevitably has been that, as published, it contains a few mistakes and omissions which no doubt would have been remedied had the proofs passed the author's vigilant eye. Moreover, there remain a number of points of interest with regard to the fabric that appear to have escaped the notice of all previous observers. It is accordingly in the belief that I can still contribute some fresh material to the study of this famous fortress that I have ventured to follow as a gleaner even in so well-harvested a field.³ Also, neither Bodiam Church nor the home-
stead moat beside it, have hitherto been satisfactorily described; nor have all three structures—moat, church and castle—been considered organically together from the viewpoint of the parochial development which they illustrate.

The picturesque hamlet of Bodiam (see Map, Fig. 1) is situated on the southern slopes of a triangular tongue of elevated land between the Rother on the south and its tributary, the Kent Ditch, on the north—the latter stream forming, as its name implies, the county boundary. Very conspicuously sited, as is usual in this part of England, the church occupies the highest portion of the area; close below it, on the north, and immediately beside the Kent Ditch, is the home-
stead moat which—in all probability—marks the *halla* of Osbert de Bodeham, noted in the Domesday survey. The village quaintly straggles down the sunny slope between the church and Bodiam Bridge across the Rother; while the castle lies a little lower down the

³ A certain amount of the matter which follows has already been published in a notice of Lord Curzon's book, which I contributed to *The Edinburgh Review*, for April, 1926; for permission to reproduce it I am indebted to the courtesy of the Editor, Dr. Harold Cox.

river, being situated about 350 yards north-east of the bridge and about 230 yards distant from the nearest part of the present channel of the river, above which it stands about 30 feet. Bodiam Bridge, as we see it, is a comparatively modern structure, but a predecessor is mentioned so far back as 1313, and in 1414 required repairs.⁴ Since early mediæval times it appears that there have been important changes in the bed of the river hereabouts⁵; and it is known that in the twelfth century its channel was navigable for vessels of commerce as far as Bodiam.⁶

From the foregoing description it will be seen that we have here at Bodiam a very complete vignette of English manorial development. The place-name is thought to preserve the memory of the *ham* of one Bodi or Bode, who would thus probably have been the first Saxon settler; but where this putative personage may have had his residence there exists no evidence to show. The homestead moat is, of course, a typically Norman construction, and its close association with the parish church is also characteristic of post-Conquest manorial arrangements. So far, all is ruled by local needs and local convenience. But in the later fourteenth century the intrusion of an urgent problem of national defence led in 1386 to the abandonment of the early homestead, and to the building of a strong military castle on a site selected so as to command the waterway of the Rother, up which, during the weak reign of Richard II., French naval raids were feared. Local and national interests have here divergently played their part after a fashion to

⁴ M. A. Lower, "Bodiam and its Lords," in *Sussex Archæological Collections*, Vol. IX. (1857), p. 296. The present bridge has a stone on the east side bearing a much weathered inscription, which appears to read as follows: "Built by the County of Sussex. B. Touch, Superintendent." The last word is doubtful. The style of lettering suggests an early nineteenth century date. The Rev. Theodore Johnson, *History of Bodiam*, IVth edition, p. 52, gives the date 1841 as on the inscription, but I have been unable to decipher this. According to E. Jervoise, *The Ancient Bridges of the South of England*, p. 47, the bridge was built in 1796.

⁵ For these changes see authorities cited by H. Sands, "Bodiam Castle," in *Sussex Archæological Collections*, Vol. XLVI. (1903), p. 118, note 2.

⁶ Lower, *op. cit.*, pp. 276-7.

which I can offer a close parallel from Scotland in the Aberdeenshire parish of Kildrummy. Here the original parochial nucleus was formed by a *motte* and associated church, dating no doubt from the Norman penetration of the old Celtic Province of Mar in the twelfth century. Between the church and the castle grew up a village community, which in the fourteenth century appears as a fully organised borough of barony. A new departure was taken with the advent of Bishop Gilbert de Moravia as the royal lieutenant in the reign of Alexander II. (1214–49), and the energetic measures then set in hand for incorporating into the realm of Scotland the territories beyond the River Spey. The lines of communication through Mar into the scene of operations now became of prime importance, and had to be securely held; and so at Kildrummy a great stone castle was erected, no longer to serve local administrative ends, but as an instrument of larger national policies, on a more suitable site about a mile to the west of the early manorial centre.⁷ The parallel between this history and that of Bodiam is singularly close and striking.

The homestead moat may at this stage conveniently be described. Of a more or less oval form, the enclosure measures about 165 yards in circumference at the edge of the ditch, and is level with the surrounding country—so that we have to deal properly not with a *motte* or any such mounded structure, but merely with what in all probability was a palisaded area enclosed by a ditch, and containing the wooden hall of the de Bodehams. The ditch measures from 9 to 16 feet in breadth, and normally the stagnant water stands at a height of about 3 or 4 feet below the enclosure *terreplein*; on the north the latter is lower, and does not rise more than 2 feet above the usual level of the water. On the south-west side the ditch is interrupted by a causeway, about 15 feet broad, leading out towards

⁷ See my papers on "A New Survey of Kildrummy Castle," in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland*, Vol. LXII. (1927–28), pp. 36–42; and on "The Early Castles of Mar," *ibid.*, Vol. LXIII. (1928–29), pp. 108–9.

the church. I take this access to be modern—dating, it may be supposed, from the time when the area was planted. On the west side the ditch shows an irregular outward expansion, presumably secondary, measuring about 7 yards deep and 13 yards broad. There is an outflow from the ditch about the middle of its east front; but it was certainly never fed by the Kent Ditch, as Sands asserts.⁸ The earthwork is at present enclosed by a large hop garden; the scarp of the ditch is closely planted with pollard willows, and the same trees, mixed with sparse oak, grow on the counter-scarp. No traces of any building are visible within the area. Lower gives the area of the ditch as 3 roods 18 perches, and that of the enclosure as 23 perches.⁹

We proceed now briefly to consider the parish church. It is dedicated to St. Giles, and first occurs, early in the twelfth century, among the endowments of Hastings College, as the Chapel of Bodiam, dependent on the Church of Ewhurst.¹⁰ It is mentioned in Pope Nicholas IV.'s survey of 1291¹¹; and there is notice of a chaplain of Bodiam early in the same century.¹² It is still a very beautiful and interesting, though, alas! greatly altered, little building of the fourteenth century—probably, in its earlier portions at least, somewhat older than the castle. As it now stands, the church, which is correctly oriented, consists (see Plan, Fig. 2) of a nave of two bays, north and south aisles with a north porch, a chancel with a north aisle, and a tower at the west end. The north aisle of the chancel, containing the sacristy and organ, is wholly modern, dating from the incumbency of the Rev. Theodore Johnstone, 1894–1924¹³; it blocks the east window of the north nave aisle, and its east wall butts against the north-east buttress of the choir. The nave aisles also are modern, externally, at all events, though evidently they are reconstructions on the old lines, and internally the

⁸ Sands, *op. cit.*, p. 115. ⁹ Lower, *op. cit.*, p. 302. ¹⁰ *V.C.H. Sussex*, ii., 113.

¹¹ A. Hussey, *Notes on the Churches in the Counties of Kent, Sussex, and Surrey*, 1852, p. 201.

¹² Lower, *op. cit.*, p. 279. ¹³ See his *History of Bodiam*, 4th edition, p. 51.

north one still shows some ancient features. The porch is a modern addition. The church has a renewed cedar roof of good design covered with the beautiful dark red tiles in use in this district. The

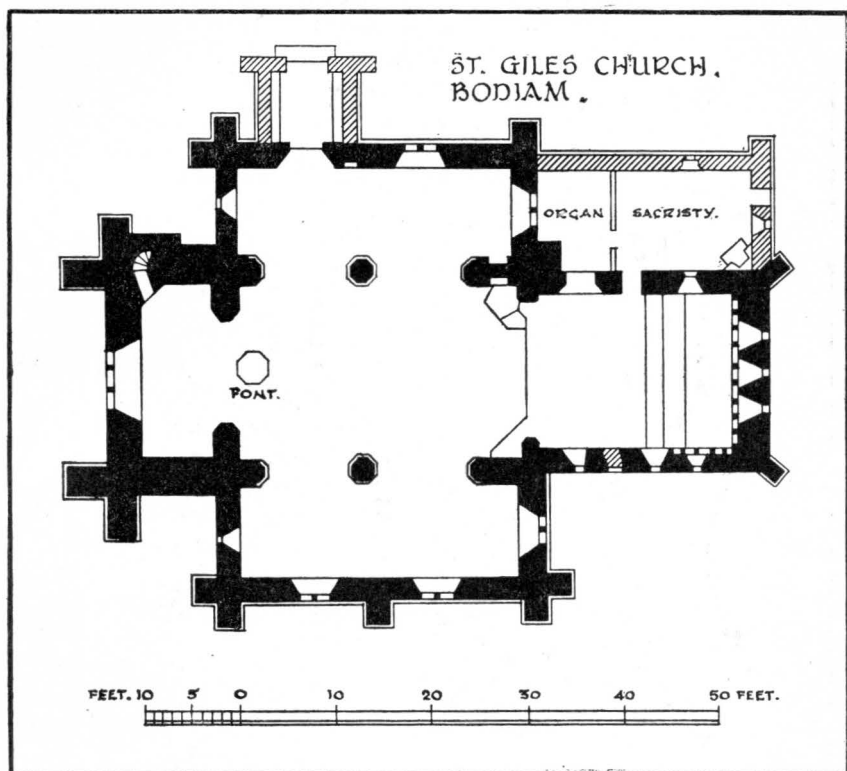


FIG. 2. BODIAM CHURCH: GROUND PLAN.

[W. D. Simpson, mens.; J. F. Wyness, del.]

roof (see View, Fig. 3) is continuous over nave and aisles, the nave being high pitched and the aisles of gentler pitch and very low. Chancel and chancel aisle are also roofed continuously, and the pitch of the aisle roof is gentler than that of the chancel. The very drastic "restoration" which has brought the church into its present state was carried out in 1851 by Mr. Augustus Eliot Fuller, the then lord of the

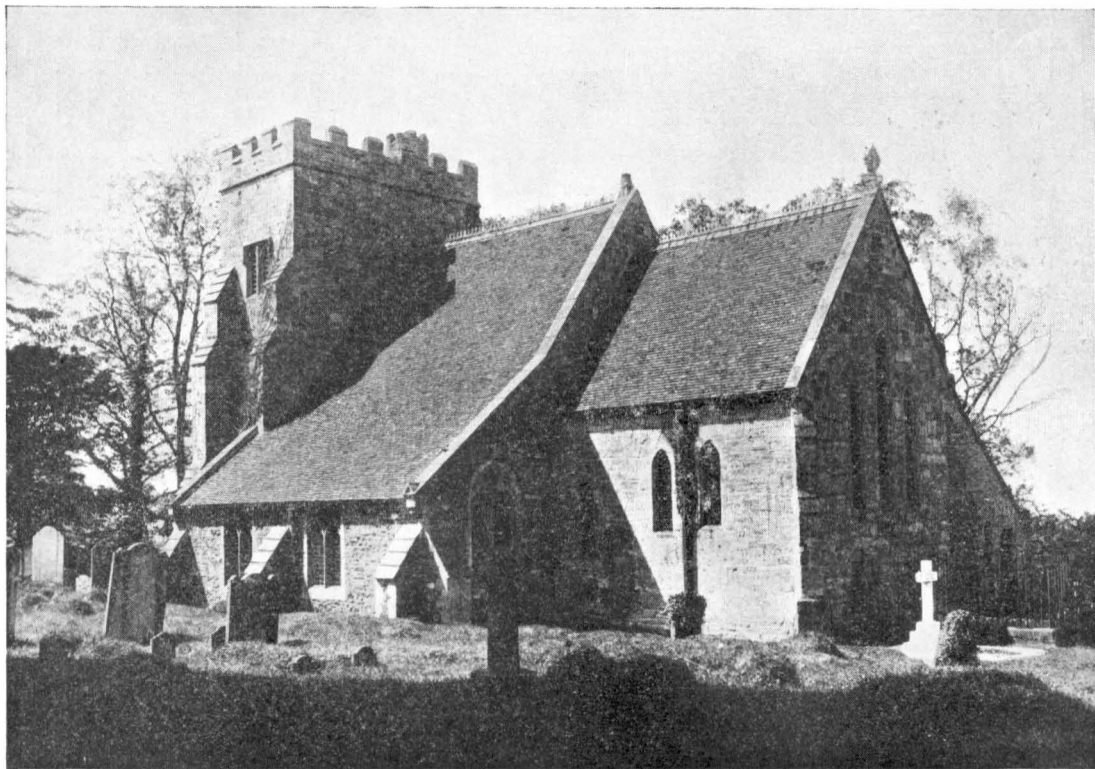


FIG. 3. BODIAM CHURCH.

Photo by E J Elphick.

manor. Its original aspect is shown in Hussey's excellent plate, from which it appears that the present set out of the roof more or less follows the old one, and that the modern choir aisle had an ancient predecessor. There are also two exceedingly interesting and very



FIG. 4. BODIAM CHURCH. Drawn by S. H. Grimm in 1784.

beautiful drawings of the church (Figs. 4 and 5), one made by S. H. Grimm in 1784, and the other by James Lambert in 1788, in the Burrell MSS., now preserved in the British Museum.¹⁴

Externally, the chancel measures about 22 feet 6 inches by 21 feet, excluding the buttresses. The total projection of the aisles, the east walls of which are flush and of one build with those of the nave, is

¹⁴ Add. MSS. 5670, fo. 5, and 5676, fo. 2.

about 13 feet; their length, being also that of the nave, is about 34 feet. The tower, placed rather remarkably with its length at right angles to the nave, measures about 12 feet by 25 feet 3 inches, excluding the buttresses.



FIG. 5. BODIAM CHURCH. Drawn by James Lambert in 1788.

The east end of the chancel has two good Decorated buttresses set diagonally against the quoins, with high bases and two weathered offsets. As often in small rural churches, these buttresses do not differ very greatly in profile from those in use during the Early English period; but their diagonal setting and the hollow plinth are characteristic of the fourteenth

century.¹⁵ The three eastern lancet windows are modern; Hussey's drawing shows a good three-light Perpendicular window in their place. In the south wall (see Fig. 3) are three practically unaltered lancet windows, with a plain outer 3-inch chamfer, the daylight measurements being 5 feet 6 inches in height and 1 foot 4 inches in breadth. The eastmost of these windows is raised so as to clear the sedilia; the western is lowest of all, and is *perhaps* a low-side window. In themselves these windows might date from the thirteenth century, and they have been claimed as Early English work.¹⁶ But such plain openings are not uncommon in lesser churches during the succeeding period—the simple lancet windows in the towers of the castle afford a parallel—and the fourteenth century date of the chancel seems clearly enough indicated by the diagonal buttresses with their hollow plinths and by the character of its masonry, to which I shall afterwards allude; also the detail of the piscina and sedilia inside is distinctly of a Decorated character. Between the westmost and the central of these windows is a blocked priest's door, with an elliptic arch, a 2 inch chamfer continuous on arch and jambs, and its sole at a height of about 1 foot 6 inches above the present ground level. This door measures 5 feet 4 inches high and 2 feet 2 inches broad. No plinth appears on the walls of the chancel, which where not repaired are seen to be built of Wadhurst stone in cubical ashlar usually of very large blocks. This masonry strongly resembles that found in the curtains and towers of the castle—a circumstance that seems to me to be another clear indication pointing to a date in the fourteenth century for the chancel. The modern aisles, etc., are all built of small-work, very

¹⁵ William Wetherden, the Vicar whose brass remains in the church, in his will, dated 8th February, 1513, left 20s. "to the mending of the Boteraces," *Sussex Archaeological Collections*, Vol. XXXVIII. (1895), p. 196.

¹⁶ Hussey, *op. cit.*, p. 201; Lower, *op. cit.*, p. 285; P. M. Johnston in *Victoria County History of Sussex*, Vol. II., p. 371, and in *Sussex Archaeological Collections*, Vol. XLI. (1898), p. 189; F. Harrison, in *Notes on Sussex Churches*, p. 66. It is with all due diffidence that I feel myself obliged for the reasons stated, to differ in opinion from these authorities.

clearly defined from the ancient masonry. The head of the west window in the south aisle—a trifoliated lancet with a casement moulding within a rebated outer splay—is old; the corresponding window at the east end, although wholly modern (except perhaps for some of the south jamb stones) occupies the place of an ancient predecessor, shown as blocked in Hussey's drawing. Beside it in the drawing is a buttress applied to the east wall of the nave just where it meets the chancel. The engraving also shows three buttresses on the south aisle, the middle one larger than the others. A doorway is shown in the western part of the south wall; it is drawn as pointed, continuously moulded on arch and jambs, and enclosed in a drip-stone terminating on corbel caps. This doorway was evidently of Decorated character. In the eastern part of the aisle a three-light Perpendicular window is depicted by Hussey. The British Museum drawings are in full agreement with all these particulars.

The tower has heavy buttresses of good Decorated pattern, similar to those of the chancel. There are six in all, one at either side closing in the end walls of the nave, and the other four placed in pairs at right angles to each other so as to encase the two free corners of the tower. They have low bases, and weather back in three plain stages. Most, if not all, of the tabling seems to be renewed. The tower has no plinth, and is finished above with a flat roof inside a battlemented parapet. Merlons and embrasures are of equal size; both finish with a gabled and projected coping. At the north-west corner a square stair turret, projecting only slightly from the tower, and pierced with unaltered plain long loops, heavily chamfered, rises into a modern octagonal head with a coned roof inside an imitation battlement similar to that on the tower. In Hussey's plate and in the British Museum drawings is shown a pyramidal finial, crowned with a vane, at the south-west corner of the tower; this finial has now been removed. All the windows in the tower seem to have been re-fashioned.

A splice in the walling marks the position of a former west door, shown by Lambert and Grimm as a high pointed arch apparently of two orders. The masonry of the tower is similar to, but rather less massive than, that in the chancel.

The west end wall of the north aisle is ancient and of masonry corresponding in kind with that of the tower; but the window has been renewed, and the quoin and skew are also rebuilt.

Internally the church was drastically dealt with by the "restorers." The walls have mostly been plastered over, and all exposed stone work apparently has been re-cut, so that it is a matter of conjecture how far the present mouldings, etc., may be held to represent the original. To the aisles the nave opens by octagonal piers and arches, all of good Decorated design; the bases are stilted, the caps bold and characteristic, with the scroll-moulding much in evidence, and the arches consist of plain, slightly hollow chamfers in two orders. The tower arch is lofty and acute, the chancel arch more of a drop-centred form. The mouldings are identical with those of the nave arcades.

The tower is of three storeys, the two upper being reached by a narrow and steep newel stair in the north-west turret. This stair with its high risers and massive newel strongly recalls those which serve the various towers in the castle. The door at the stair-head, opening into the belfry, has a drop arch, and on arch and jamb displays a 4-inch chamfer, finished below with the tall broach stop so regularly found at the castle. The five very tuneful bells were hung in 1761; in 1854 they were recast, and two were again recast in recent years.

East of the porch in the north aisle is a stoup recess having a delicately profiled hollow-chamfer moulding brought out to the square beneath a chamfered drop-arch, and terminated below by a broach stop. In the east end wall of this aisle is a fine late Decorated window, now masked by the choir aisle. It is of two trefoiled lights, with a cinquefoil above.

The sedilia consist of two seats, stepped. They have pointed arches, wrought with a double hollow chamfer, and over them a good Decorated hood moulding of ogee section ending in a simple twist of a type not uncommon in plainer work of this style. The piscina has a plain pointed and chamfered arch, stopped below; the bowl is shallow and quatrefoiled, with central drain. In the north wall of the choir opposite is a plain lancet window, now blocked by the sacristy. Externally this window has a double chamfer.

Built into the west wall of the tower are four small brasses:—(1) The mutilated but extremely spirited figure of a knight in armour, about the end of the fourteenth century, bearing on his surcoat the arms of de Bodeham, *or*, a fess dancettée *sable* bezantée; (2) an escutcheon charged with the same arms; (3) the shroud-brass of a vicar; (4) an inscription commemorating the vicar William Wetherden, who died 26th February, 1513, and may perhaps be portrayed on the shroud-brass; and (5) a plate inviting prayers for the souls of Thomas Grove and Christian his wife.¹⁷

The internal dimensions of the church are: Length of nave, 30 feet; breadth, 18 feet 3 inches; length of aisles, 28 feet 6 inches; breadth, 9 feet 1 inch; length of chancel, 21 feet; breadth, 15 feet 8 inches; tower, 17 feet 9 inches by 7 feet 2 inches.

As to dates: the upper part of the tower appears to be of about the same period as the castle, or perhaps just a little later—its parapet at all events seems to be of a rather more advanced type than those of the castle, the merlons and embrasures not being of unequal size as in the latter, and both being coped, whereas at the castle the coping is omitted in the embrasures; at the church, however, the external bead moulding found on the castle copings is omitted. All these features are of distinctly early Perpendicular type. The lower part of the tower and the chancel are, I think, the oldest parts now identifiable in the church; they may date from perhaps *circa* 1350. The

¹⁷ For these brasses see Lower, *op. cit.*, pp. 281, 285-6.

same date may be assigned to the nave in so far as its interior features as now evident may be held to have preserved or to reproduce their ancient character. In connection with the evidences of date deducible from the fabric itself it becomes significant to note that in a will of 1382 money is left "towards the building of the church of Bodiam."¹⁸

From the de Bodehams the manor of Bodiam passed to the family of Wardeux; and, somewhere in the latter half of the fourteenth century—prior at all events to 1377¹⁹—Elizabeth, heiress of the last Wardeux lord, brought the property to her husband, the famous knight Sir Edward Dalyngrigge, the builder of the Castle. The will above referred to is that of a member of the Wardeux family, William de Wardedieu, Archdeacon of Chichester. As the family at the date of this will, 1382, no longer possessed Bodiam, this circumstance shows that they continued to have a special interest in the church; a fact which, compared with the evidence of style, suggests that the church may have been begun by the last of the Wardieux, and completed by Sir Edward Dalyngrigge. It is to be noted that William de Wardedieu had been vicar of Bodiam in 1370.²⁰

Sir Edward Dalyngrigge, sprung from a good old fighting Sussex stock seated at Dalling Ridge, near East Grinstead, had served with distinction in the French wars under that silent and heavy handed soldier of fortune, Sir Robert Knollys, whose "mitres," in the grim jest of his men, marked his cruel path of devastation over the fair fields of Normandy and Brittany.²¹ Returning home in the reign of Richard II. Sir Edward settled down at Bodiam, taking an active part in local and national affairs; and on 20th October, 1386, he received a licence to "strengthen with a wall of stone and lime, and crenellate and construct and make into a castle his manor-house of Bodyham, near

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 285.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 289.

²⁰ Hennessy, *Chichester Clergy Lists*, p. 34.

²¹ The gables of burned houses, standing forth against the skyline, were compared to mitres.

the sea, in the county of Sussex, for defence of the adjacent country and resistance to our enemies." The motive prompting the grant, so clearly revealed in this language, is illustrated by the fact that nine years previously—owing to the paralytic condition of the English navy in the decadent closing days of Edward III.—a French fleet, under the great Admiral Jean de Vienne, whose exploits adorn the brilliant page of Froissart, had sacked the port of Rye. It is also illustrated by the circumstance that, on 24th March previous to the grant of the licence to crenellate, the name of Sir Edward Dalyngrigge is entered first upon the roll of a commission appointed under royal letters patent to fortify that port.²² Clearly the warlike knight was specially interested in the then urgent problem of coastal defence.

The time was one of great anxiety and discontent in England. John of Gaunt, popularly regarded as the one "strong man" in the realm, had sailed away in July to Portugal on a wild-goose chase of his own. The young and unstable King Richard was in the hands of two ill-disposed, ambitious, and unscrupulous ministers, the Duke of Gloucester and the Earl of Arundel. All summer the French had been busy with vast preparations for a descent upon England; ships were gathering at Sluys and in the Breton harbours; and Charles VI. himself, the Oriflame displayed before him, was on the march—so rumour ran—with all the chivalry of France to embark on his Armada. In London alarm was great. The shire levies of the Midlands were massed around the capital; those of Kent and Sussex watched the Channel shore; and a fleet of sorts, hastily scraped together, rode uneasily at anchor at Sandwich and Dover. It is against such a background of national apprehension that we must sketch the erection of Bodiam Castle.

Clearly from the terms of the licence a twofold object, personal and national, was envisaged. On the one side, the lord of the manor desired leave to furnish

²² *Calendar of Patent Rolls*, Richard II., 1385-89, p. 123.

himself with a home more suited to the increased means which he had amassed (one may fairly presume) in the Continental wars. On the other hand, the King and his advisers had to prepare for the defence of a coast threatened with invasion, and to provide for the security of its *hinterland*. Herein doubtless lies the explanation of the fact that though the licence, as we have it, proposes the fortification of the existing manor house, in the event a different site was chosen and a new castle erected. An example of what resulted when a licence to crenellate was applied to an older manor house (as had been intended at Bodiam) may be seen at the episcopal castle of Amberley, also in Sussex, where Bishop William Rede, having obtained a licence in 1377, enclosed the scattered manorial buildings with a curtain wall and gatehouse.²³

Also in the special circumstances, as detailed above, we may find the reason why the stronghold so erected was the last great purely military castle to be reared in England. At a time when everywhere else the castle was giving place to the semi-fortified manor house, Bodiam ranks with Shirburn and Bolton and Nunney as one of a group of castles built by veterans of the third Edward's wars, and in their robustly martial character reflecting something of the spirit of the contemporary *châteaux* in France that their founders knew so well. Mr. Harold Sands observed a certain likeness between Bodiam and the Château de Villandraut, near Bordeaux, which he thought Sir Edward Dalyngrigge may have admired while attending the court of the Black Prince there. But there seems no reason to stress this resemblance, for Bodiam fully represents the logical outcome of the development which the English castle had been undergoing on its own account ever since the time of Edward I.—a development marked successively by the omission of the keep, increased prominence given to the gatehouse, and a tendency towards simplification, i.e. to concentrating

²³ See W. D. Peckham on "The Architectural History of Amberley Castle," in *Sussex Archaeological Collections*, Vol. LXII. (1922), p. 30.

the defence in a single well-manned *enceinte*, in place of multiplied concentric wards which were apt to become an entanglement to the defenders even more than the besiegers. The exceptional character of Bodiam is apparent rather than real, being due to the fact that elsewhere in England castles of any sort were almost ceasing to be built, owing to the supremacy of the royal power, the growing internal peace of the country, and the rising standard in domestic comfort. Villandraut is a building nearly a century older than Bodiam,²⁴ for French military architecture had attained a corresponding stage in development at an earlier period. It has not the double gatehouse, in front and rear, which is so characteristic of the English Edwardian castle, and is well seen at Bodiam. Sir Edward Dalyngrigge's castle is quite English in all its features, and there seems no reason to adopt Lord Curzon's view that "the general plan of a moated castle, consisting in the inside of a single court or quadrangle, and defended by a broad and deep wet fosse, was borrowed from the Continent, and in the main from France."²⁵

To the specialist the interest of Bodiam consists in the fact that it is a castle substantially of one date, and that a known one. Built upon ground where the engineer was free to design his works unhampered by topographical difficulties, it represents, as I contend, no exotic plan imported from abroad, but in logical perfection the ideal English castle of the fourteenth century. Not even Beaumaris is more severely symmetrical in all its arrangements. The plan (Fig. 1) is simplicity itself. A rectangular area is enclosed by lofty and massive curtain walls, having stout drum towers at the four angles, a square tower on each of the two sides, and imposing machicolated gatehouses in front and rear. Over the walls, which average 6 feet

²⁴ The date of Villandraut is given as 1306-7 by Camille Enlart, *Manuel d'Archéologie Française*, Vol. II., p. 539. Viollet le Duc, *Dictionnaire Raisoné de l'Architecture Française*, Vol. III., p. 140, placed the castle *circa* 1250; he is followed by Sands and Curzon.

²⁵ *Bodiam Castle*, p. 54.

6 inches thick, the building measures about 150 feet by 135 feet; the drum towers are 29 feet in diameter, and rise to a height of over 60 feet above the water. On the main gatehouse are seen the heraldic achievements of de Bodeham, Wardeux, and Dalyngrigge, while over the postern the founder placed, in graceful compliment, the shield of his old chief, Sir Robert Knollys. Around the court inside were compactly arranged the domestic buildings—hall and kitchen on the south side, state rooms and a fine chapel on the east, servants' quarters and offices to the west and north. All these rooms are well appointed, and illustrate in every particular the improved standards of the age. At the top of the south-west tower is a dovecot, and in its base a cistern or well.

The approaches to the castle, in front and rear, are of very high interest. Opposite the main gate in the north side an octagonal stone-cased islet is formed in the middle of the lake, and from this the gatehouse was reached over bridges and through a barbican tower on a smaller island. The octagon itself is now approached by an earthen causeway in line with the gatehouse; but a built semi-octagonal pier on the west side had long given rise to the suspicion that the original access to the octagon was by a bridge at right angles from this point. Lord Curzon's excavations have settled this important question. The causeway on the north is secondary, and the timbers of the ancient bridge, between the octagon and the pier to the west, were discovered lying in the mud when the moat was drained.²⁶ The south gate, or postern, communicated with the land by a similar bridge carried directly over the moat, resting on a stone underbuilding and terminated in a built pier. The water defences and approaches, whose exact character Lord Curzon has

²⁶ Lord Curzon speaks (p. 89) of these timbers as "lying in the mud at the bottom of the moat, as they had fallen perhaps centuries ago"; and again (p. 90), remarks that "in spite of the fall and of their prolonged immersion, they had moved very little from their original and respective positions." But it does not seem apparent where the "fall" comes in; the timbers shown in his plans and photograph are quite evidently the foundations of the bridge, still *in situ*.

thus established, are exceeded in interest, among castles in England and Wales, only by those at Caerphilly, and are surpassed in preservation by none. The objection, put forward by Clark,²⁷ and echoed by Lord Curzon, that the whole elaborate system of defences could be nullified "in a few hours" by cutting through the retaining bank of the moat, need not be taken seriously. Clark himself admitted that "the mud, until dry, would be even a better protector than the water"; but, quite apart from any such consideration, to cut through the bank would scarcely be an easy job, or one of a few hours, under the full command of parapets and towers lined by the finest archery in Europe.²⁸

Opposite the castle, and well within arrow range, a harbour, large enough for the vessels of those times, was excavated in the bank of the Rother. As the river now flows at a lower level than in the fourteenth century, the harbour had thus become dry; and Lord Curzon, desiring to see it filled again with water, could accomplish this only by throwing a mound across its outlet to the river—an unfortunate alteration, which obscures its real character. It would have been better to leave it alone; but this is the only material point on which any criticism can be directed against the work which Lord Curzon carried out in and around the castle. To the west of the harbour is a broad flat space, defined on the north by a natural bank, and on the south screened from the river by an artificial mound, the area thus enclosed being over 500 feet in length, and varying between 300 and 150 feet in breadth. Lord Curzon conceived this to have been a tiltyard, and as such accordingly it is now indicated by a signpost. But the level of this so-called tiltyard is below that of the harbour; even to-day its surface is three-quarters a quagmire, and its condition must have been much worse in the fourteenth century; so that it is

²⁷ *Op. cit.*, Vol. I., p. 241.

²⁸ The archery range (220 yards) as drawn out by Harold Sands, is shown on Fig. 1.

difficult to imagine how it could have made at all a suitable jousting ground for knights clad in the heavy panoply of that time.

Lord Curzon wonders how many years the castle may have taken to complete. But the uniform character of its plan, and the entire similarity alike of masonry and of architectural detail in all parts of the structure, suggest very strongly that the whole is the result of one pre-ordained, straightforward, and rapid effort of building. Château Gaillard, the masterpiece of Richard I., and a much greater work than Bodiam, was erected in a single year; and at Bodiam, as at Château Gaillard, there was an urgent political and strategic motive to finish the castle with the utmost speed. Lord Curzon thought that certain of the cusped windows in the domestic buildings betray a later date, but it should be noted that cusping is found quite commonly in the windows of the gatehouse towers and curtains; and the windows to which he specially draws attention, at the south-west corner of the court, are exactly matched by a window which overlooks the chapel from a room above the sacristy, as well as by two others—of which one is now partly destroyed—midway in the west wing. There is equally little justification, in my view, for the opinion of Clark that the chimney stalks are perhaps of late date; the cavetto under their cornices is identical with that found beneath the cornices of the towers and turrets. Definitely secondary work, it is true, is found in the rear-building prolonging the main entrance passage; but even here it must be noted that the vaulting in this addition is identical with that of the main trance—a circumstance which suggests that the addition was made during the process of erection. Such a prolongation of the trance is not infrequently found about this period in England, for example, at Portchester; and it is worth remarking that similar lengthening of entrances, from whatever reason, took place in a number of the bigger Scottish castles during the fifteenth century. The small open platform, or *tête du*

pont, external to the postern gate, is also secondary, its walls butting up without bond against the tower. Also to be included in secondary work is the blocking of a door which had led through the cross wall containing the "drying chimney" at its east end. Both in the main gate and in the postern tower the vaulting bosses of the passage are pierced with round holes that older writers took to be apertures through which quicklime and boiling pitch or lead might be cast upon assailants. Clark and other authors have doubted whether such materials were ever in use for defensive purposes, and suggested that these apertures at Bodiam were for thrusting down pikes or posts to check a rush; purposes to which they are manifestly unsuited—as shown, for example, by the fact that the bosses of the wall ribs are pierced with semi-circular holes, useless for any such plan. Lord Curzon²⁹ adheres to the older view, and instances a remarkable passage from *Don Quixote*, in which "cauldrons of resin, pitch and burning oil" are mentioned as apparatus of defence. It may also be noted that in the Norse account of the siege of Rothesay Castle in 1230–1, it is stated that "the Norwegians attacked the castle, but the Scots defended it, and they poured out boiling pitch." Another version reads: "The Scots defended themselves well, and poured down upon them boiling pitch and lead."³⁰ It is thus clear that the old-fashioned explanation of the use of such apertures cannot be lightly dismissed, in the words of Sands, as a "puerile idea."³¹

There is an interesting difference in detail between the vaulting of the main trance and that of the postern, in that the latter, though otherwise identical in pattern, rests not upon corbels but upon caps and shafts; the shafts are not strictly defined, but unite with the adjoining walls by bold reversed curves in a rather remarkable fashion. The bases are stilted and semi-

²⁹ *Op. cit.*, 127–8.

³⁰ See A. O. Anderson, *Early Sources of Scottish History*, Vol. II., p. 476.

³¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 117.

hexagonal, of early Perpendicular type, and the caps are similar in design. The vaulting here is plastered over.

One of the most singular features in Bodiam Castle is the arrangements for access to the rampart walks. These arrangements do not seem hitherto to have been correctly described by any writer. The walk between the gatehouse and the north-west tower is reached by steps down from each tower, the steps in both cases being masked by a high merlon. In the gatehouse the steps are contained within the door-jamb; in the north-west tower they are all external. The other section of the north curtain, east of the gatehouse, is reached only from the north-east tower, and by steps down within the door. To the south, this tower opens upon the northern section of the east curtain walk by one external step down; and from this curtain the east mid-tower opens by one step up. The southern section of the east curtain can be reached only from the south-east tower, which opens northward upon it by steps down within the door. The eastern section of the south curtain walk is reached from the postern tower by two steps down; the western section is reached on the level from the south-west tower. The southern section of the west curtain is reached on the level from the south-west tower; the northern section in a similar manner from the west mid-tower. It will be observed from these particulars that there is no through-going access all round the *enceinte* on the wall-walks. All the doors of access to the wall-walks are square-headed except those from the north-east tower southward and from the south-west tower eastward, which are pointed, and that from the north-east tower westward, which is pointed and depressed. The two doors of access to the west section of the north curtain are checked for a wooden door opening outward, being the only ones so provided.

Sands imagined that the four drum-towers were capped with high conical roofs. Lord Curzon greatly doubts this, without committing himself definitely to

an opposite view. But it may be stated positively that the roofs were flat, from the absence of any raggle or water-table on the stair turrets, which take up the whole breadth of the wall head, and upon which any such roofs must necessarily have impinged. The raggles show that the roofs over the gatehouse were of very low pitch, easily clambered over and not seen above the embrasures. That machicolated parapets are applied to the gatehouses only, and not to the angle towers, is a characteristically English mannerism; in France at this period all the towers would have had superb machicolated crowns, like those of Pierrefonds; in Scotland also, as shown by such examples as Bothwell, Caerlaverock and Craigmillar, the French fashion tended to be followed. Details such as this must be borne in mind by those who are unduly disposed to seek a French *provenance* for Bodiam. On the front of the gatehouse towers these machicolations measure from 2 feet 9 inches to 3 feet 6 inches by 1 foot; the lateral ones measure 2 feet 6 inches by 11½ inches. On the postern tower the machicolations are about 2 feet 6 inches by 1 foot.

Among the interior buildings of the castle, that which presents most features of architectural interest is the chapel. It is placed on the first floor, and overrides the curtain wall, which in the crypt is carried through below so as to form a solid altar platform. An exactly similar arrangement is found at the Scottish castle of Kildrummy, of which mention has already been made; but at Kildrummy the chapel (see Fig. 6) is set obliquely to the curtain wall, in order to secure correct orientation; whereas at Bodiam, which is aligned to the compass, no such distortion was necessary. The triple lancet window of the chapel is rather plainer and of more Decorated type than other important openings in the castle; but the window already mentioned, which opens at a high level in its south chancel wall, from above the sacristy, has been of two trefoiled lights within a square frame up to which the mullion is carried in typically early Perpendicular fashion. A

clear structural joint marks the place where the south nave-wall of the chapel butts against the sacristy, which with the room above it (including the ornate window mentioned) is of one build with the east end; the south nave wall is therefore later in order of construction. A similar but much more irregular joint

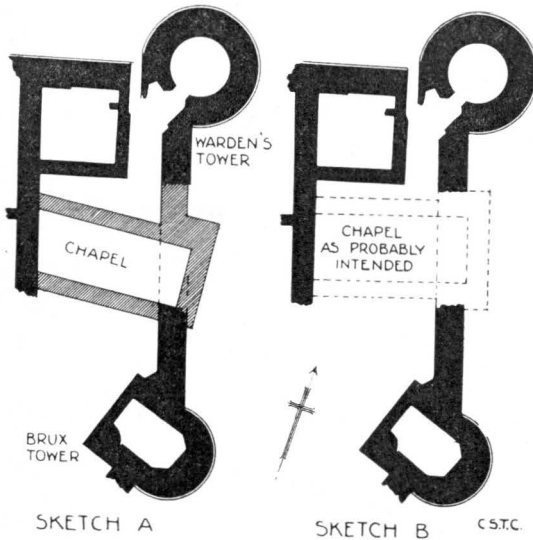


FIG. 6.

PLAN OF THE CHAPEL AT KILDRUMMY CASTLE.

(By courtesy of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland.)

occurs at its west end. Lord Curzon follows Clark in a curious error by describing the sacristy as vaulted and groined, which it is not, and in crediting it with having two aumbries instead of only one; this is a plain rectangular locker, gible-checked. In the chapel proper the only ecclesiological detail now remaining is the piscina in the customary position. The projecting bowl, which was enriched, has been cloured away, exposing the central drain. The arched niche is obtusely pointed, daintily moulded in two casements or wide hollow chamfers, with a small quirk between them; these mouldings die out on a wide

stop-chamfer finishing below in a straight arris. The height of the niche is 1 foot 6½ inches; breadth, 1 foot; depth, 6½ inches. This piscina is a delicate and altogether a distinguished little piece of work.

In the angle between the wall and the corbel which carries the projecting hood of the south fireplace in the kitchen, as also in corresponding position at the north fireplace, there is placed a large corbel, which Clark describes as having been put there to buttress the thrust of the arch. But it is difficult to understand why any such special counter-stress should have been thought necessary, for the bearing corbel is very massive and seems fully capable of standing the strain. It appears to me much more likely that this angle corbel, which has a flat top, is a sconce for a light. Corbels for this purpose are found in similar situations, beside a fireplace, in the Scottish castles of Yester and Tulliallan; Mr. Salzman draws my attention to an English example at Michelham Priory.³² It may here be mentioned that the ordinary domestic fire places of the castle conform pretty much to a standard type; they have four-centred arches, and are moulded on voussoirs and jambs with a gible check set within a hollow chamfered edge. The large fireplace on the first floor midway in the east wall has joggled voussoirs, and over it is a straight hood with a kind of imitation miniature corbel-table ornament, very dainty. The fireplace below this has a flattish quarter-round, sunk in a hollow, instead of the usual edge-moulding as described above; this fireplace also has joggled voussoirs.

In regard to the moulded detail generally throughout the castle, it may be said that this is plain, as beseems a military structure, but vigorous, and pervaded always by a fine sense of style. Angles are everywhere chamfered, and where possible a preference is revealed for a heavy or broad chamfer—reaching as much as 7 inches at the main gate openings, but at the smaller reveals a 4-inch chamfer is usual. Hollow

³² *Sussex Archaeological Collections*, Vol. LXVII. (1927), p. 19.

chamfers are not infrequent. A noteworthy detail, recurring regularly in all departments of the castle, and on the barbican, is the use of a tall broach stop at the lower termination of the chamfers; it is so universal as to be accounted a distinctive feature of the building. The mouldings of the two main doors opening into the domestic apartments from the courtyard are both unusual; the south door has a double ogee moulding, set back within a hollow chamfered order; the west door is still more singular, having a double chamfer—on the outer order of 4 inches, and on the inner order of $6\frac{1}{4}$ inches—with a broach stop rising to a point in the channel or quirk between the chamfers. In the buttery hatches the jamb moulding is of rather a thirteenth century character, consisting of a semi-circular hollow sunk in a broad chamfer; the stilted bases on the other hand are of a good Perpendicular design. All round the base of the buildings in the court runs a plain, heavy splayed plinth of 6 inches projection, stopped at the doors. Considerable remains of plaster exist on many of the walls, particularly in the north-west corner. The external masonry of the towers and curtains is ashlar in yellow Wadhurst stone, weathering into a comely grey; the joints are wide, and the blocks tend to be of unusually large size, a common dimension being 1 foot 10 inches by 1 foot 10 inches—a cubit either way. Oyster shells are not infrequently employed as pinnings.

One or two problems connected with the water-way approaches may now be considered. Lord Curzon, as we saw, proved by excavation that the original approach to the octagon, as Cotton and Sands had maintained in opposition to Clark, lay at right angles from the half-pier at the west bank. The earthen causeway to the north is thus shown to be an after-thought, and Lord Curzon dismisses it as modern.³³ But the matter does not seem to me to be quite as simple as this. The causeway was certainly in existence by 1737, as Buck's engraving shows; and it

³³ *Op. cit.*, pp. 55, 89.

may well be very much older. Its head, towards the octagon, is revetted in masonry which Clark describes as modern, but to me it has all the appearance of medieval work—although of course we cannot exclude the possibility of old stones having been re-used. In this connection it is worth noting that the splayed bases of the various orders which make up the jambs of the main gate have all been more or less cloured away; evidently the whole architectural base of the portal has been sacrificed to secure entry room for carts. May not this alteration have ranged in time with the construction of the direct access by a solid earthen causeway from the north? In any case, it seems to me that such an important reconstruction of the approach to the castle is *a priori* much more likely to have taken place during the period of its occupation than in the eighteenth century, when it was a deserted ruin, frequented only by an old gardener who had built for himself a hovel against the postern tower.³⁴ A third alternative, that the causeway was made to facilitate the carting away of the materials of the inner buildings when these were dismantled, is improbable; had the dismantling been a piecemeal process for the sake of the stone and lime, such a view might be possible; but we shall see that the demolition was evidently a penal one, and, rather than go to the enormous labour of constructing such a causeway, the destroyers would surely have called in gunpowder to their more speedy aid. Besides, why then would a gap, evidently intended to be bridged, have been left between the causeway and the octagon? The existence of this obviously defensive feature seems to me clearly to prove the ancient date of the causeway.

Another question which may be asked is: why was the south bridge built on stone foundations while the main bridge rested merely on timber trestles? Was the south bridge reconstructed on more solid foundations at the time that the main bridge was abandoned and the causeway from the north bank built in its

³⁴ Curzon, *op. cit.*, p. 81.

stead? Or was it that the south bridge had to bear heavier loads coming up from the harbour? The precise resemblance on plan between its stone underbuilding and the timber trestles of the north bridge—presupposing in each case a more or less identical superstructure—certainly suggests that the two bridges were contemporary in date.

The uniformly perished state of the buildings within the courtyard is clearly the result of deliberate demolition, not of piecemeal spoliation, still less of natural decay. It has been suggested that the castle was dismantled in 1483, when it was captured on behalf of Richard III.; but the relics found in the course of Lord Curzon's excavations prove a continuous occupation throughout the sixteenth and into the seventeenth century; a number of wine-bottles of seventeenth century type, for instance, were found in the cellarage below the buttery. Lord Curzon, therefore, holds the probable view that the castle, in common with other strong places in Sussex, was "slighted" by the Parliament during the Civil War—although he clearly demonstrates that the common story, ascribing its destruction to Sir William Waller in 1643, is erroneous. That siege artillery was actually laid against the castle during this period is suggested by the presence, some 267 yards to the north of it,³⁵ and overlooking it from the brow of the sloping ground, of a worn earth-work known of old as the Gun Garden or Gun Battery Field. I make it out to consist of a terrace fronting and parallel to the castle, about 220 yards in length, and returned some 25 yards on either flank so as to merge into the rise of the ground. Facing the castle its terrace seems to be covered by a slight ditch, above which it rises 6 or 8 feet. This work has all the appearance of a gun platform of the seventeenth century; it is certainly too far away from the castle for any ordnance that might conceivably have been employed in the siege, if siege there was, of 1483. It is, however, equally clear that the castle, even if guns were trained

³⁵ Reckoned from the counterscarp of the moat opposite the gatehouse.

against it during the Civil War, must have fallen without a bombardment, as its outer walls—on the menaced front equally as elsewhere—are unscathed by cannon shot.

One thing at all events is beyond dispute, that deliberate destruction followed the “intaking” of Bodiam. A point about which a final word of comment may be made concerns the way in which this destruction was managed. Had the aim been to obliterate the military value of the castle, its outer walls and towers would have been blown up—as was done on so extensive a scale elsewhere, notably at Corfe. The fact that the *enceinte* was left unmolested, while the inner buildings were saved, suggests that the motive was rather to punish the Royalist owner, Lord Thanet, by making his home uninhabitable. A penal not a military demolition is distinctly indicated. It may therefore be confidently asserted that the damage was wrought by order of Parliament upon a hostile house, and that the idea put forward as a possible alternative by Lord Curzon, that the demolition may have been a precautionary one, carried out by the owner himself, or with his consent, i.e. either by Lord Thanet or by his Parliamentary successor, Sir Nathaniel Powell—must be left out of account. Such a precautionary measure would have been purely military in its purpose. The case of Banbury Castle, cited by Lord Curzon—a Parliamentary house which Parliament itself ordered to be destroyed in 1641—very exactly illustrates my point; for here the fortifications were ordered to be demolished, while the residential part was to be spared, whereas at Bodiam just the reverse has taken place. The other instance of precautionary demolition, quoted by Lord Curzon, that of Bolsover Castle, is equally inapplicable; for the treatment applied to Bodiam, so far from being an “exact counterpart” is again completely opposite. “The house itself, as it relates to private habitation,” which at Bolsover was to be “as little prejudiced as may be,” at Bodiam has been almost completely

cleared away; whereas the "outworks abroad," "turrets and walls that are of strength," instead of being demolished, as was ordered at Bolsover, remain intact at Bodiam.³⁶

In concluding this paper, which is already too long, I may be allowed to offer one or two observations about the present state of the building. Lord Curzon in his book has paid a just tribute to the work of conservation—"energetic, cautious, well executed, and necessary," "reconstructive and prophylactic rather than constructive"³⁷—accomplished by his predecessor, Lord Ashcombe. To Lord Curzon's own far more extensive operations the same verdict may fitly and fully be applied. While ensuring the structural stability and soundness of the fabric, he has wisely eschewed a needlessly drastic technique, and has not made the aesthetic mistake of stripping every vestige of greenery from the grey old walls. After all, the artistic appeal of our ancient monuments is as valuable an aspect of them, and one quite as worthy to be conserved, as their purely archaeological or structural interest. Unfortunately Lord Curzon died before his full programme of work at Bodiam was accomplished. It is earnestly to be hoped that the National Trust, to whom he bequeathed the custody of the building, will be able to complete the conservative measures that must still be accounted necessary. They have already made a good beginning in placing a flat concrete roof on the west mid-tower—a preventive measure which might with advantage be applied to all the towers of the castle.

I have to record my very grateful thanks to the Rev. P. R. Mitchell, O.B.E., M.A., Rector of Bodiam, who courteously gave me facilities to survey the church, and has supplied me with information on various matters; and to Mr. J. Past, custodian of the castle, for much willing assistance.

³⁶ Curzon, *op. cit.*, pp. 75-6.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 82, 84.