Early Leicestershire Castles: Archaeology and Landscape History

by Oliver Creighton

This paper analyses three aspects of the study of early castles in Leicestershire. Two detailed case-studies of individual castle sites emphasise the often complex and multi-phase nature of their development. Further attention is given to some of the problems in identifying early castles, whilst the final section turns to viewing relationships between early castles and medieval settlement patterns. In all cases it is suggested that castles must be re-integrated within the context of their surrounding landscapes in order to fully understand their rôle and development.

Introduction

This paper is based on findings derived from the author's ongoing research project into relationships between castles and their surrounding landscapes in Yorkshire and the East Midlands, and has a two-fold aim: first, to demonstrate the way that topographical and archaeological research has helped to illuminate the origins, nature and function of individual castle sites in Leicestershire, and second, to demonstrate that the majority of castles in Leicestershire, as elsewhere, must be viewed holistically as manorial components within their contemporary landscapes.

An historically-based survey of the castles of Leicestershire has been the topic of an earlier paper in this journal (Cantor 1977-78; additions McWhirr and Winter 1978-79). Nonetheless, more general developments within the field of castle studies, particularly in terms of reassessing the importance of earth and timber fortification (Barker and Higham 1992), an increasing corpus of excavated data suggesting antecedent occupation on castle sites (*ibid*, pp.36-77), and a growing realisation of the value of landscape analysis to the study of castles (Austin 1984), renders a revision essential. The scope of this paper is restricted both to 'early' castle sites (taken here to mean sites which seem most likely to originate in the period 1066-1216), although the significance of antecedent occupation in some cases will be underlined, and to the more minor examples, thus excluding Leicester castle, itself the focus of an ongoing programme of research.

Leicestershire Castles: Excavation and Fieldwork

Excavation of early Leicestershire castles has been limited. Only two sites (Groby and Sapcote) have been exposed to modern, rigorous methods of excavation, whilst more restricted work has taken place at Castle Donington, Hallaton, Hinckley and Mountsorrel, although the spatially limited nature of these excavations, and in many cases their unpublished status limits its value. For understanding the majority of sites

therefore, morphological analysis, coupled with analogy based on similar sites elsewhere, is the main analytical tool available.

Two castle sites and their environs, Groby and Gilmorton, are examined in detail, preceding a review of some general problems in identifying early castles in Leicestershire, whilst the final section affords an insight into the rôle of Leicestershire castles in the medieval landscape. A brief appendix summarises a number of relevant minor excavations not covered in detail within the text.

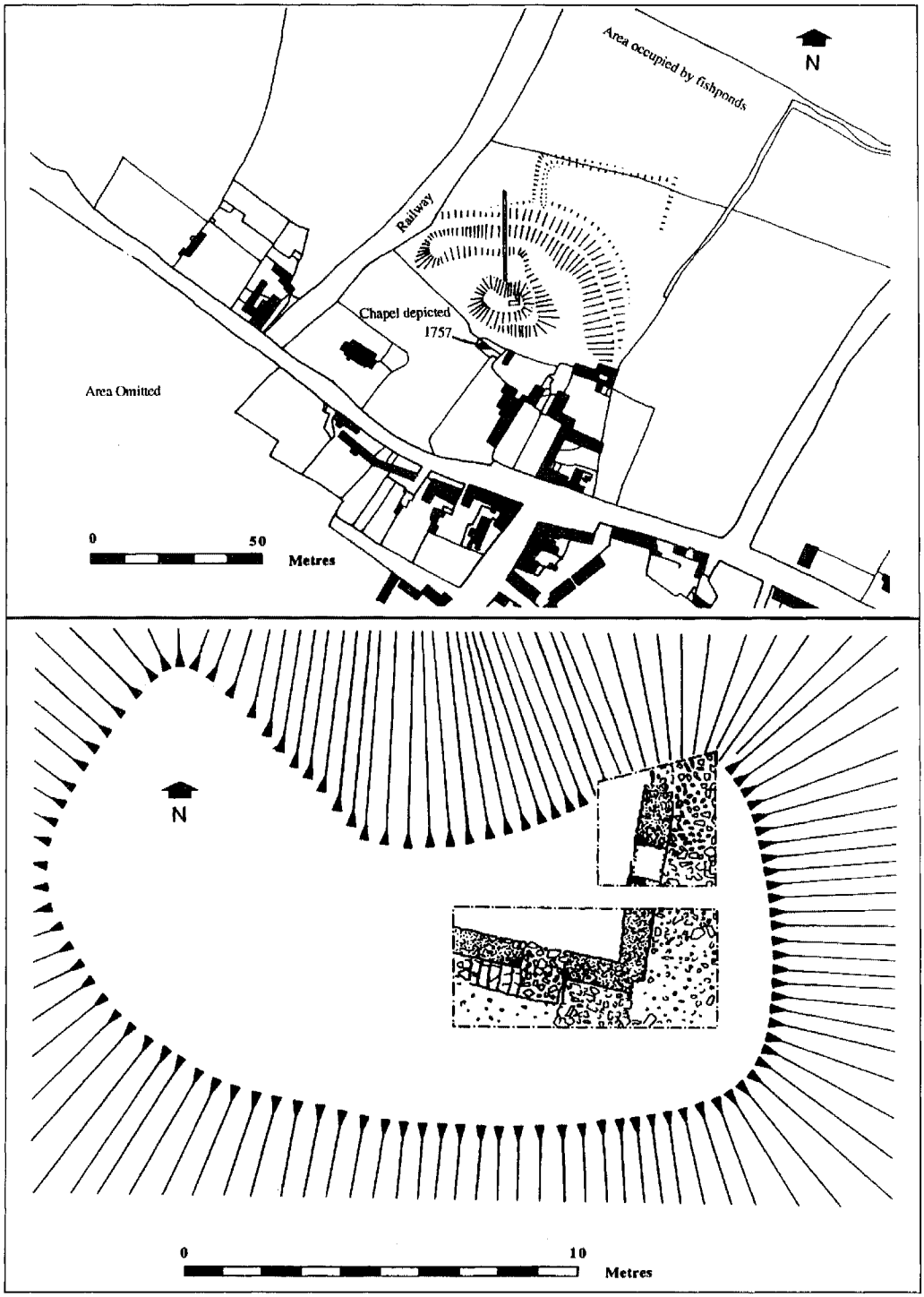
Groby

Excavations at Groby castle (SP 524 076) in 1962-63, directed by B.K. Davison, took place in advance of the construction of the A50 bypass. Two small areas were opened (illus. 1), and although time limits prevented full excavation to the lowest levels, the results have immense significance both in terms of rationalising the format of the castle, and demonstrating unexpected antecedent occupation. The excavation has been alluded to elsewhere (Liddle 1982, p.19; McWhirr and Winter 1978-79, p.74), yet remains unpublished (Davison: unpublished site notebook). The interpretations here presented appear with the kind permission of the director.

A north-south section through the bailey defences to the north of the motte (illus. 1) sectioned a massive rock-cut ditch, *c.* 15-18m wide and of an unknown depth, which presumably circumvallated the motte. An earthwork hollow appearing to be an 'inner' bailey ditch (illus. 2) was demonstrated to be an entirely specious feature relating to a later stage in the site's history, comprising a depression left in the later infilling of a single, original ditch. The excavation thus underlines the manner in which the last phase of a castle earthwork can shroud earlier development, giving the illusory impression of a single phase where in reality the site history is far more complex. The profile of this bailey, now entirely denuded, survived as a landscape feature as late as 1757, when it was depicted as an ovular enclosure in an estate plan (Woodward 1984, p.20-21); this also showing a cruciform building south-west of the motte, now vanished, probably originating as a castle chapel.

More remarkable was the evidence of a standing stone structure of well-mortared, granite construction, sealed within the body of the motte. Only the south-east corner of this structure was revealed (illus. 1), demonstrating it to have measured a minimum of 20ft. x 16ft. (*c.* 6.1 x 4.9m), to have stood 6-7ft. (*c.* 1.8-2.1m) high, and to have been oriented west-north-west to east-south-east. The walls were between 2ft 6in-2ft 9in (*c.* 0.76-0.84m) thick, with an (apparently later) doorway on the south side, linked to a series of external stone steps. The excavator speculated that the structure formerly projected above the level of the motte summit, providing in effect a ready-made parapet (Davison, unpublished). This feature was subsequently filled in, and the walls reduced to a uniform level, possibly in order to support a timber superstructure (*ibid*), perhaps in a manner similar to Sulgrave, Northants. (RCHM 1982, pp.139-40).

Notably, the stone structure seems to have been perceived as constituting the main strength of the site, as the present elliptical form of the motte is a direct product of slighting, presumably under the orders of Henry II in 1174 (Cathart King 1983, 253), in a manner specifically designed to undermine and disrupt this core feature. The documentary reference to '*Tourhull(e)*' (Tower Hill) in an *Inquisition Post Mortem* of 1343 (Cox 1971, p.498), is also significant. The date seems too early for the '*Tour*' element to relate to the gazebo-like feature depicted on the motte-top in the plan of 1757, and may thus relate to the 'tower', by this time certainly a relict feature.



1. (Top) Plan of Groby castle earthworks and village *c.* 1886 (based on First Edition OS Sheet XXX NE), showing areas excavated in 1962-63. (Bottom) Detail of excavated area on motte-top (based on Davison, unpublished)

2. Groby motte looking east, showing the earthwork hollow in the foreground formerly identified as an 'inner bailey ditch'
Photo: O.H. Creighton

What is remarkable is that the stone structure clearly antedated the motte, itself composed of granite blocks contained within a sandy matrix and mortared over so as to provide a flat summit. The manner in which the south-east corner of the structure was robbed or had tumbled some time prior to the construction of the motte is of further significance. In this sense the motte was certainly not the product of rubble derived from the 'tower' later consolidating and grassing over in the manner of Middleton Stoney, Oxon. (Rahtz and Rowley 1984, p.61), and is likewise unlikely to have functioned as an earthwork abutment to a small keep in the manner of Ascot Doilly, Oxon. (Jope and Threlfall 1959). Certainly the walls of the structure are insufficient for it to have been intended as primarily defensive, and again the robbed status of the corner implies that motte and 'tower' were not constructed in a unitary sense.

The motte effectively provides a *terminus ante quem* for the tower, and as such the date of the motte's construction is vital. Although the castle was slighted whilst under the ownership of the earl of Leicester in 1176 (Brown 1959, p.268), there is no pressing reason to date its foundation as late as the twelfth century, and if one subscribes to the quite plausible notion that the castle was constructed under the orders of the holder of the manor at Domesday, Hugh de Grantemesnil (Page 1907, pp.258-59), then the stone structure can be speculated to have pre-Conquest origins.

Whilst it is possible that it represents an early church tower in the manner of Great Somerford, Wilts (Renn 1968, p.313), the ecclesiastical status of Groby, dependent upon Ratby, makes this unlikely. Alternatively, it could represent a late Saxon manorial precursor to the castle site in the manner of examples such as Sulgrave, Northants. (RCHM 1982, pp.139-40).

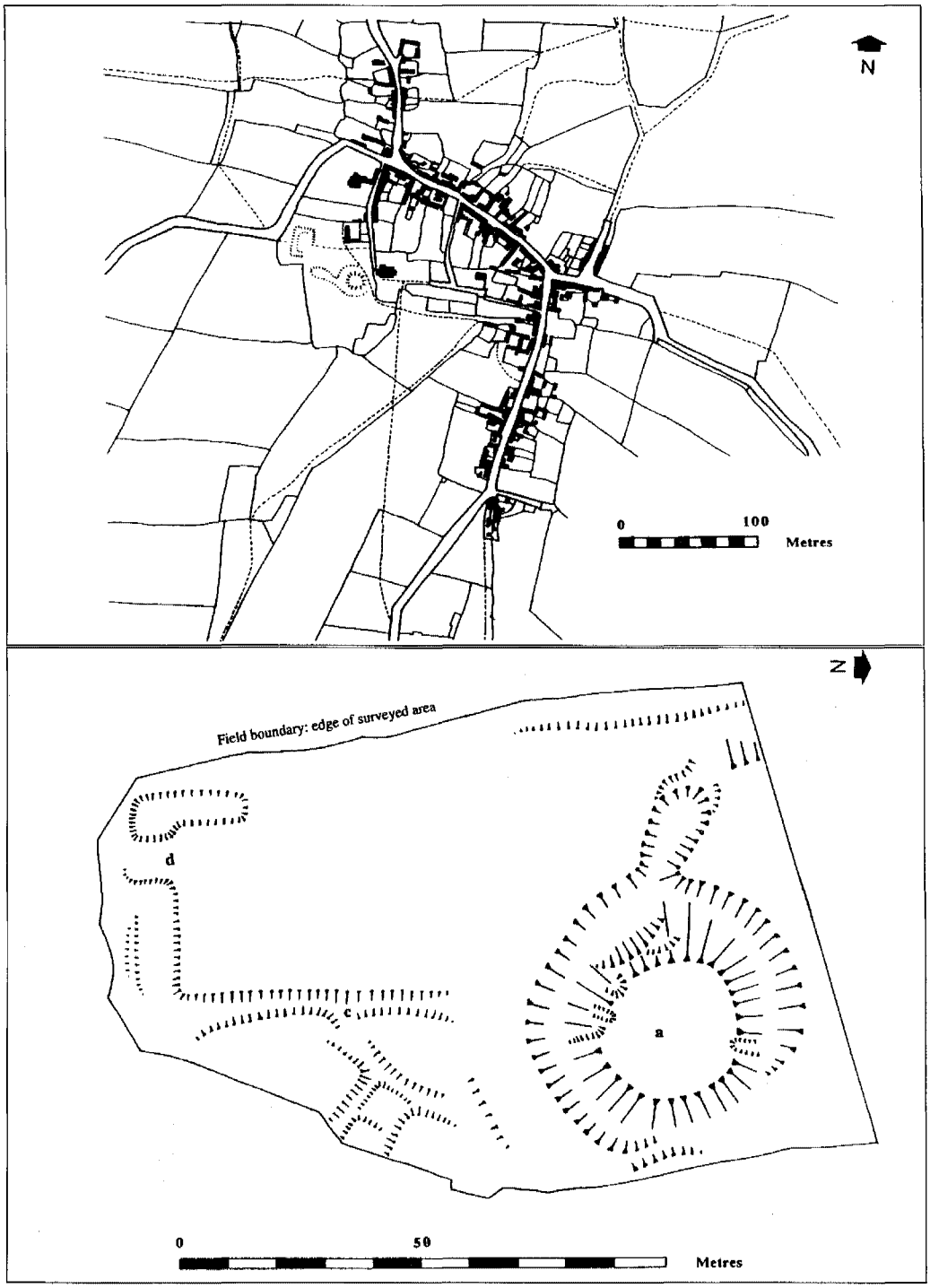
Seeing the site within the context of the surrounding landscape, the unconventional siting of the motte - it is overlooked from the village to the south-west - may be thus explicable in terms of a decision to build upon the site of this earlier structure. This certainly reflects a degree of martial opportunism, in using the fabric of an extant standing structure to immediate defensive advantage, despite its physical situation, yet also hints at deeper motives. Certainly the domination of an earlier church/manorial site is a highly visible manifestation of an act of conquest, yet simultaneously a form of continuity.

The evidence of antecedent occupation also serves to emphasise that the castle earthworks at Groby are but one stage in continuous manorial development on the site, which ultimately emerged as the seat of the Grey family. In this sense the earthworks north of the motte (illus. 1), apparently representing a manorial enclosure adjoining to the bailey, and a complex of fishponds, testify to a post-military reorganisation of the site. A similar sequence, of the 'manorialisation' of an early castle, can be more clearly seen at Gilmorton.

Gilmorton

At Gilmorton (SP 570 879), an earlier survey of the earthwork remains of a motte and its immediate environs (Winter 1977-78) has been updated (illus. 3); a number of features being notable. The motte itself (a) is relatively low, raised between 2.6-3.1m above the base of the surrounding ditch, and with a level sub-circular summit averaging 27m in diameter. A number of irregularities around the edge of the motte are not original features, relating instead to a combination of undated, clandestine excavations and natural slumping, the latter revealing the motte to have a gravel core. The low, flat profile of the motte may suggest that it has been lowered, presumably in order to support a residential structure rather than being a conical earthwork formerly supporting a timber tower in the manner of Hallaton (see below), and is certainly more than a temporary fortification. The absence of a surrounding ditch on the east side (elsewhere 1-1.2m in depth) appears not to be an original feature in the manner of Shawell (see below), as a modern footpath and drain have obscured the original layout in this area. Slight remains of a counterscarp bank, presumably once surmounted by a timber palisade, survive to the south-west of the motte as a low earthwork.

The feature to the north-west of the motte (illus. 3: top) has been interpreted as a moated successor to the castle (Cathart King 1983, p.253; Mc Whirr 1974-75 ed., p.55), and is marked on Ordnance Survey maps as a '*moat*'. Reinterpretation of this feature suggests that it is rather a series of manorial fish-stews, presumably associated with the castle site. A horseshoe-shaped bailey to the north-west of the motte is clearly marked on the Victoria County History plan of 1907, although later accounts have suggested that this is entirely denuded. In this respect two features are important: firstly, the area occupied by the putative bailey (b) is notably more level than the surroundings, and is raised 0.5-0.6m above the surrounding ground surface; and secondly, the arm of the ditch striking north-west of the motte towards the



3. (Top) Plan of Gilmorton castle earthworks and village *c.* 1883-84 (based on First Edition OS Sheet XLIX NW) (Bottom) Detail of motte and associated earthworks (the field boundaries are modern and not as shown above)

fishponds aligns with a short curvilinear length of scarp continuing as a vague earthwork feature in the garden to the north. Together these features seem to define the former extent of the bailey.

Seeing this earthwork complex within the context of the parish church - located a mere 12m south-west of the motte - we have a striking case of manorial continuity on a castle site, allowing the formulation of a tentative two-phase sequence: namely that the fishponds are a secondary addition to an early motte and bailey at a time of increasing stability, resulting perhaps in the lowering of a once higher motte and the disruption of the bailey defences in order to create the fishponds and ensure their water supply. This action would certainly have compromised defensive needs, and is a sequence mirrored locally at Oakham (Hartley 1983, p.30-32).

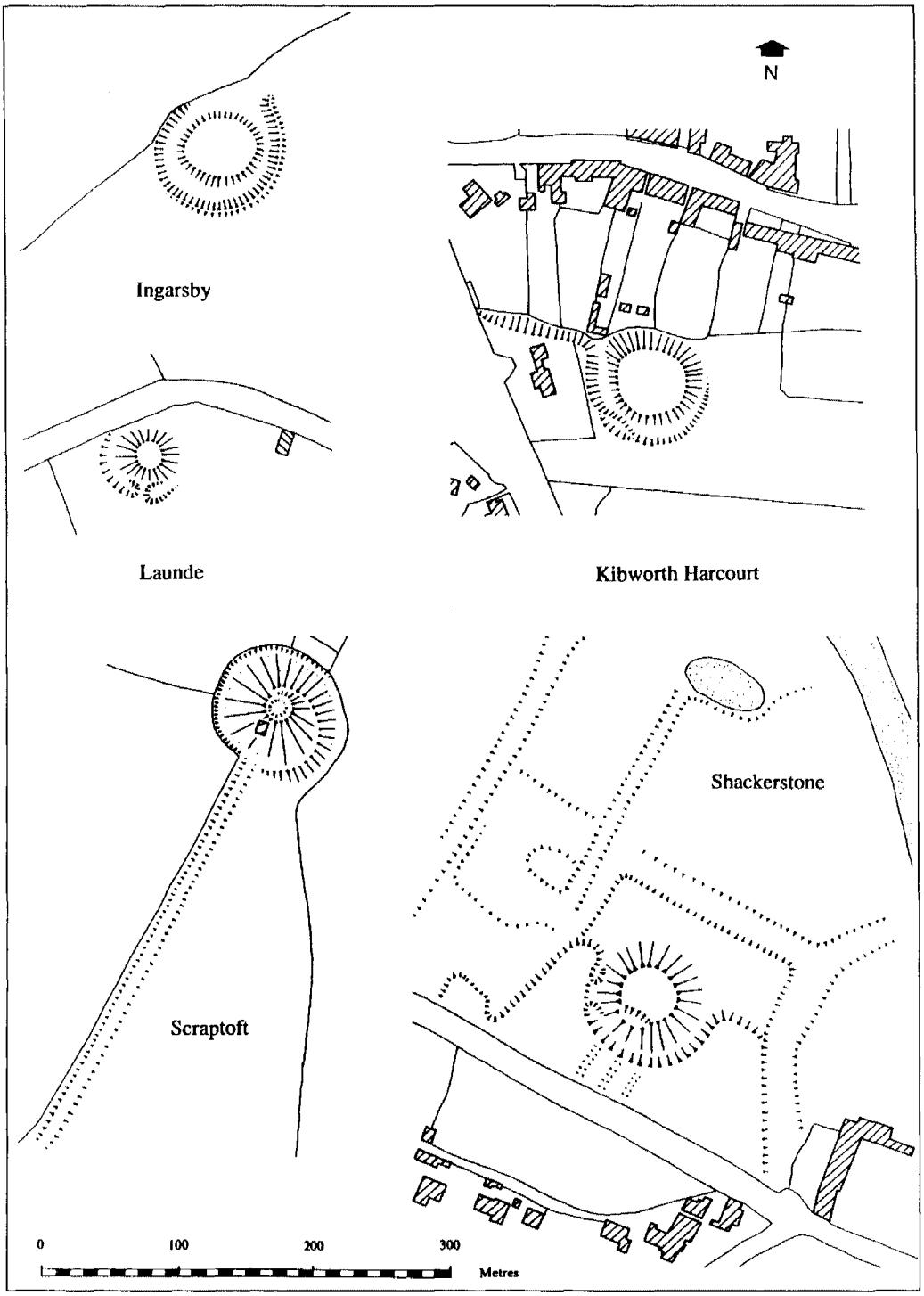
Earthworks to the south of the motte can be rationalised as a series of regular house platforms and denuded croft enclosures backed by ridge and furrow cultivation, all fronting onto a low hollow way leading from the castle site (c), which links to a second linear hollow-way. The area to the west of this feature is marked by vague 'humps and bumps' perhaps indicative of further, heavily denuded settlement remains. A zone of further earthworks marking the southern extent of the settlement earthworks seems to relate to later mining activity (d), or, possibly, a second, much denuded series of fishponds.

This juxtaposition of the castle-church cell and medieval settlement earthworks is puzzling when viewed within the context of the village plan. The dislocation of this complex from the modern focus of settlement could be explained in a number of ways. It is possible that here we see the desertion of one (perhaps specialist) focus of a polyfocal village. Yet the settlement topography makes it more logical that the remains represent a settlement shift from an earlier focus associated with the castle, to the regular 'L'-shaped street plan. In this context the pathway striking south of the motte to join the main Lutterworth road, at the point where the latter dog-legs markedly to align with the pathway (illus. 3: top), may indicate an early line of communication antedating the laying out of the main village.

'Possible' Castle Sites

A number of earthwork sites within Leicestershire illustrate the potential confusion between early castle earthworks (particularly mottes) and other landscape features, both earlier in date (such as barrows, particularly those of Roman or Saxon date, whose size relative to prehistoric barrows makes them more 'motte-like' in format), and later (such as post-medieval garden features, and windmill mounds). The overall picture is confused both by the willingness of motte constructors to adapt and fortify relict landscape features, such as barrows (e.g. Marlborough, Wilts.), and the suitability of mottes for remodelling as post-medieval garden features (e.g. Aslockton, Notts.). It is further tenable that all possibilities could be combined within a single site. In deciphering such questions it is vital to combine morphological analysis with an examination of the site's landscape context. Illus. 4 depicts a sample of such sites.

Motte-like features at *Shackerstone* (SK 375 069) and *Scraptoft* (SK 654 059) have been alleged to be early castle sites (Cathart King 1983, p.255), and both are associated with outworks which could superficially appear to represent bailey enclosures. Yet seen within the context of their post-medieval landscapes, both features can confidently be identified as prospect mounds from which to view respectively the houses and grounds of Shackerstone and Scraptoft Halls, and there is



4. Comparative plans of motte-like features in Leicestershire

little circumstantial evidence to suggest that this is re-use. A similar scenario is likely with regard to the mound at *Gumley* (SP 679 899), which seems to have been sited with reference to the designed landscape associated with Gumley Hall. Certainly the size of prospect mounds elsewhere in the county, such as the example due east of Launde Abbey and overlooking the formalised garden layout (SK 798 043), here with a diameter of *c.* 60m demonstrates the potential for confusion with mottes.

There is a lack of consensus about the status of mounds at *Launde* (SK 790 047), *Melton Mowbray* (SK 748 188), *Kibworth Harcourt* (SP 681 945), and *Garthorpe* (SK 834 208), all of which have been suggested as mottes, although in no case is the earthwork associated with a bailey. At Launde, the field in which the site lies is known as 'Mill Close', and despite earthwork survey of the site at Melton (Liddle 1989, p.119); references to the sale of a mill here (Hartley 1987, p.11) indicate that it is most likely to originate as a mill mound.

Despite suggestions to the contrary, there is little to suggest that the mound at Kibworth Harcourt is anything but a motte, and its similarity in plan to the feature at Ingarsby is striking (illus. 4). Two small-scale excavations at a large mound in the village in *c.* 1837 and 1863 are problematical in that is unclear whether they relate to the feature discussed here, or to a large windmill mound north-west of the village at SP 678 949 (Anon 1837; Trollope 1869). The nature of the material recovered raises the possibility that the excavated feature is a barrow later raised into a mill mound - making it likely that the excavated site is not the possible motte in Hall Close. Notably the Domesday entry relating to Kibworth Harcourt records a 'Frenchman', and it is not inconceivable that this relates to a Norman sub-tenant or retainer occupying the castle in 1086; remarkably, Gilmorton and Ingarsby, both the sites of early castles, are two of only a handful of other Leicestershire Domesday entries containing references to 'Frenchmen'.

Two scenarios are likely with regard to the mound at *Garthorpe* (SK 834 208): either it represents a windmill mound conveniently situated adjacent to a water mill, or testifies to the deliberate juxtaposition of motte and water mill in order to secure and display seigneurial control over of the local means of production. The non-excavated nature of the site means that we cannot be certain, although the feature perhaps seems too massive merely to represent a mill mound.

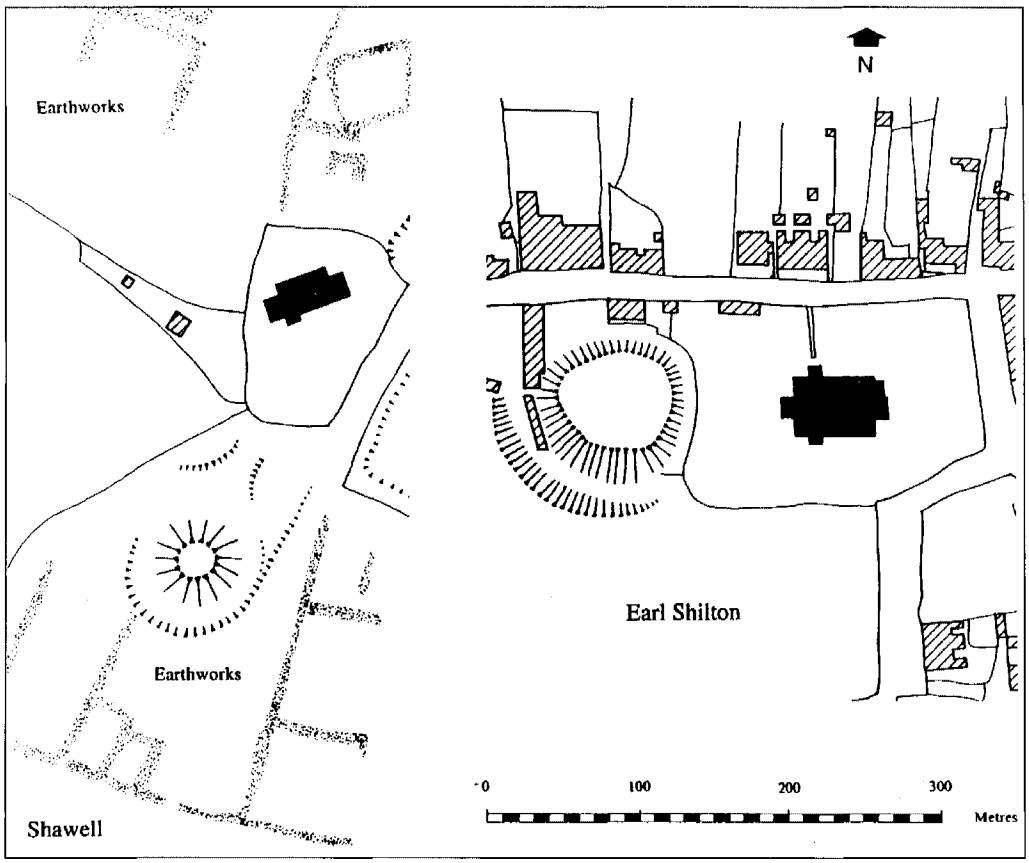
The ditched mound known as 'Monks grave' at *Ingarsby* (SK 681 049) has been alternatively viewed as a small ditchless motte, or a barrow. Although this site too lacks a bailey, landscape analysis would recommend its interpretation as a temporary earthwork castle (see below).

A comparable county-wide analysis of early castle sites in West Yorkshire has concluded that a considerable number of early castles remain to be located (Faull and Moorhouse 1982, pp.734-42), and that marginal evidence such as place- and field-names are under-used in this respect. A number of 'castle' place-names exist in Leicestershire, some of them clearly misnomers (e.g. Castle Hill, Beaumont Leys), and some more plausible (e.g. Bawdon Castle, recorded in 1481 - Cox 1971, pp.409-10), the site of a conical hill, whilst a similar place-name at Desford is suggestive. Yet the keynote here remains that marginal evidence for such sites must be treated with extreme caution, and we must beware of inflating the numbers of isolated mottes without baileys by identifying incorrectly other landscape features.

The Castle in the Leicestershire Landscape

In a number of cases early castle and church are juxtaposed in such a way as to suggest a close functional relationship. This is certainly true of Leicester Castle, where St. Mary de Castro seems most likely to have originated in a proprietary capacity for the castle seigneury, although the possibility that it began life as an early minster antedating the castle can not be ruled out. At a lower, rural level we can see parallel processes. At *Sauvey* (SK 787 053) a remarkable reference in July 1244 records the supply of timber to facilitate the construction of a chapel (Colvin 1963, p.829), the usage of the phrase '*de novo*' implying that it was a new construction. Here the castle chapel was contained within the castle perimeter, a relationship also likely at Groby, where the present church is modern, and the 'old chapel' chapel mentioned in 1371 (Farnham 1920) lay within the bailey (see above). In such cases the castle chapel was extra parochial, yet in other examples we can speculate as to the relationship between early castles and nearby parish churches (illus. 5).

At *Shawell* (SP 541 796) the church lies a mere 65m north-east of the motte, and the two institutions are linked by a low earthen causeway crossing the motte ditch. At Whitwick too, church and castle are less than 100m apart (although artificially divided



5. Plans of castle-church relationships at Earl Shilton and Shawell

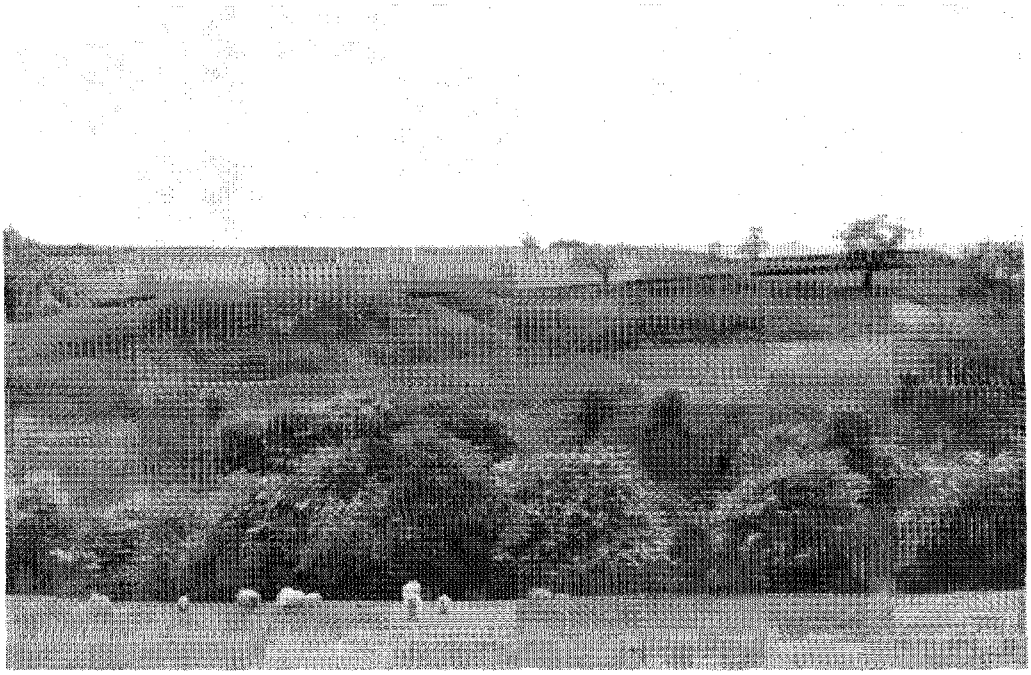
by a modern railway cutting), and a similar relationship has been noted at Gilmorton. Although in these examples we have no direct evidence to decipher the chronological relationship between castle and church, circumstantial evidence makes it probable that in many cases the settlement pattern was sufficiently established by the time of castle foundation for a church already to have been in existence. In many cases therefore, the association of castle and church may testify to a deliberate seigneurial imposition within the very core of existing settlements, dominating the church in an effective seizure of a local symbol of power; similar relationships having been noted in Nottinghamshire (Speight 1994, p.63).

At *Earl Shilton* (SP 470 982) we may be slightly more certain as to the reasons behind the association of castle and church. Here the rectilinear churchyard occupies the area of the bailey immediately east of the motte and fossilises its plan. This ensures that all evidence of the bailey defences has been eradicated, but also hints at a deeper relationship between castle and church. The mention of a priest at Earl Shilton in the Leicestershire Domesday is no infallible indicator of pre-Conquest origins for the present site, yet here it seems that the castle has quite deliberately embraced an extant parish church within its defences, as such making a statement of conquest to the existing community.

In other cases we can note the position of church relative to castle and settlement as reflecting an element within a planned town. Norman nomenclature indicates the foundation de novo of castle-dependent boroughs at *Mountsorrel* (SK 585 149), and *Belvoir* (SK 820 337), where it is likely that informal trading and settlement at the castle gate preceded the laying out of regular burgage plots and the later formalisation of urban status through grants and charters, whilst a similar situation is likely at *Castle Donington* (SK 448 276). At Mountsorrel, excavation has demonstrated the poor drainage of burgage plots (Lucas 1987), and the evidence supports the notion of a seigneurially forced nucleation at the castle gate on an otherwise restricted and poorly chosen site.

Elsewhere castles form elements within village topography. At Shawell the settlement may have migrated away from an original core in the vicinity of the castle and church (illus. 5) in a manner perhaps similar to Gilmorton, a process paralleled at Lilbourne, Northants. (RCHM 1981, pp.126-28). At Ingarsby the motte was positioned so as to overlook a stream crossing providing access to the village from the east, and seems to indicate a form of short-term seigneurial property protection, perhaps in the confused political geography of the Anarchy, again in a manner paralleled elsewhere (*cf* Knapwell, Northants. - RCHM 1968, pp.160-163).

At *Hallaton* (SP 780 967) the castle is almost certainly of the immediate post-Conquest period, constructed under the orders of the Domesday landholder in order to secure control of a remarkably compact contiguous block of estates, all in the hands of a single subtenant of Geoffrey Alselin (Liddle 1982, p.19). Yet in contrast to places such as Earl Shilton the castle lies over 600m from the core of the village. This situation is largely responsible for the remarkable preservation of the site (illus. 6), yet also poses questions as to the motives behind the siting of the castle. Topographical opportunism must have played a role in the decision making process, as the site lies on a low hill top at the confluence of two streams, overlooking the 'old Leicester way' to the north. But here, instead of conquest through Norman intrusion into the core of an extant settlement, as seems the case at Earl Shilton, at Hallaton we see a

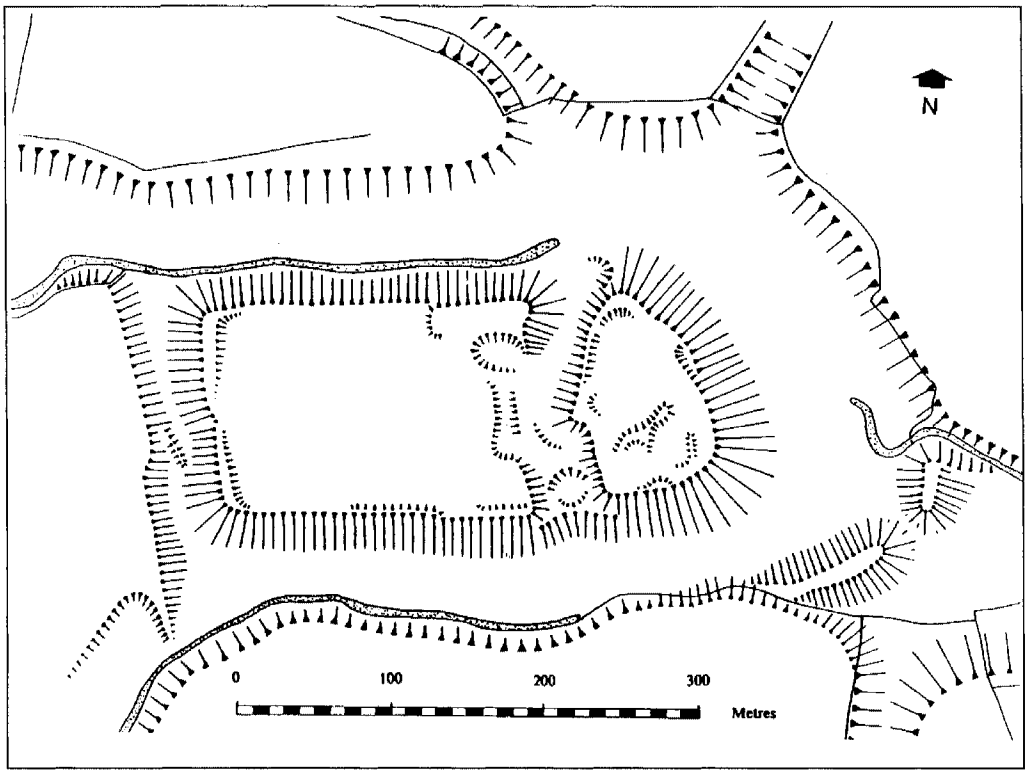


6. Hallaton motte and bailey looking west from near the village
Photo: O.H. Creighton

dislocation of castle and village, perhaps hinting at a physical and metaphysical stand-off between lord and community in the immediate post-Conquest period.

Elsewhere, to say that a castle was isolated is a misnomer, as most were entwined with the workings of the manorial economy as administrative centres within estates. But social and economic demands could dictate that a castle could carry out these functions in a position isolated from other settlement. Sauvey castle (illus. 7), is one such example, lying in the north-west corner of the forest of Rutland, and functioning as the principal centre for forest administration in a remote position, although administratively associated with the manor of Withcote (the deserted settlement around Withcote Hall lies *c.* 1km to the north-east). This manor is granted as an appendage to the castle under the reigns of John and Henry III, although the situation is reversed by the time of Henry IV, when it is the castle which is granted as an appendage (Farnham and Thompson 1921), reflecting the declining importance of the site. The particular functions of Sauvey, as a royal hunting seat dictated that here, seclusion was at a premium (as reflected in the place-name Salveé - 'the dark island (Cox 1971, pp.198-199), and defensive needs less vital.

The site is overlooked from its immediate surroundings, and relies on the skilful adaptation of water defences for its strength. Two curvilinear banks with an intervening gap which lie to the south-east of the site are not defensive in purpose (Page 1907, p.250), but represent a remarkable water management feature containing in effect a shallow lake which entirely surrounded the site. Analogous features exist at Ravensworth, N. Yorks., and Bardsey cum Rigton, W. Yorks., two sites of remarkably similar plan. At Sauvey the castle is itself a specialist form of settlement within a local



7. Plan of Sauvey castle

settlement pattern which is also predominantly non-nucleated. Elsewhere, we have seen that in other cases what may appear to be early castle sites are rather other landscape features.

Conclusion

A study of the functions and formats of early castles in a lowland, midland county such as Leicestershire has considerable value for understanding regional trends in castle-landscape relationships. Two essential features emerge in our analysis. Firstly, we can see that a low-lying castle site such as Groby, Gilmorton or Sapcote could continue to be adapted and to function as a seat of manorial administration long after the need for defence had declined. Secondly, despite the thesis that the form of the castle was essentially a post-conquest phenomenon, we can demonstrate that in an area such as Leicestershire castle-builders usually had to adapt their fortifications to pre-existing features, and site their castles relative to an existing administrative framework in order for them to function effectively as centres for the control of newly appropriated estates. It is only in the case of *de novo* castle dependant boroughs such as Mountsorrel or Belvoir, or rare examples of 'isolated' castles such as Sauvey that we can see the impact of the castle on less developed areas of the landscape.

Appendix: Excavation of Early Leicestershire Castles

Excavation at *Castle Donington* (SK 448 276) took the form of a section cut cross the inner ditch of the ringwork (Reaney, unpublished). This was shown to have been re-cut at least once, and tumbled masonry perhaps derived from a circular tower was recovered, whilst the volume of sixteenth-eighteenth century pottery in the upper layers led the excavator to speculate as to the presence of post-abandonment squatter settlement within, or against, the castle walls. No evidence was recovered to support the commonly-held notion that the defences are prehistoric in origin.

At *Hallaton*, excavations through the core of the motte in 1877 (Dibbin 1876-78), whilst poorly recorded, provide a tantalising insight into the construction of an early motte and bailey, the lowermost levels of which comprised a peat-like deposit associated with cut brash, all preserved anaerobically. The motte appeared to have been constructed in a series of distinct horizontal layers of gravel and boulder clay, capped by a hard chalk stratum. No evidence of a structure crowning the motte top was recovered, although this is probably explicable in terms of the primitive excavation methods; certainly the present-day depression on the motte-top is a product of excavation rather than evidence of a collapsed structure. A remarkable list of wooden artefacts recovered included a shovel, bowls, and a 'ladder'. Notably, evidence of iron working recovered from the bailey and corroborated through a second smaller-scale excavation by Hall in 1943 (Leics. SMR), gives a hint of economic aspects to the functioning of a site-type typically understood only in military terms.

At *Hinckley* (SP 428 938), the earthworks are often misquoted as a ringwork. In fact the surviving earthworks represent a substantial bailey, the motte having been entirely obliterated by development. Its surrounding ditch was recorded during construction work in 1976 (Leics. SMR).

Excavations at *Mountsorrel* (SK 582 149) by F. Ardron in 1952 took place within the bailey ditch, revealing a substantial destruction deposit comprising building material associated with twelfth/thirteenth century pottery and medieval floor tile (Ardron, unpublished). Notably the presence of green-glazed wares in the assemblage (D. Sawday: pers. comm.) may indicate that occupation continued in some form after the castle's slighting in 1217 (Cathart King 1983, p.255).

At *Sapcote* (SP 488 933) the original choice of castle site allowed the area to be continuously occupied and adapted as an extensive manorial compound; a moated enclosure of which was excavated in 1958 (Addyman 1960). Later excavation by Leicestershire Archaeological Excavation Group revealed stone structures and other features but have not been fully assessed or published (archive with Leicester Museums). The name 'toot close' however clearly indicates the former site of the motte described by Nichols (1811, p.898).

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