WALLINGFORD CASTLE

IN THE REIGN OF STEPHEN

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WALLINGFORD CASTLE, situated in one corner of the old Saxon burh and control-ling the spot where a route to the west crosses the Thames, is undoubtedly the premier "fighting" castle of Berkshire. To consider such a castle solely in terms of its building or of isolated events that occurred there is to take it out of context, reducing its dynamic role to the static and descriptive. Thus the object of this article is to examine the part played by Wallingford castle during the years 1135 to 1154,
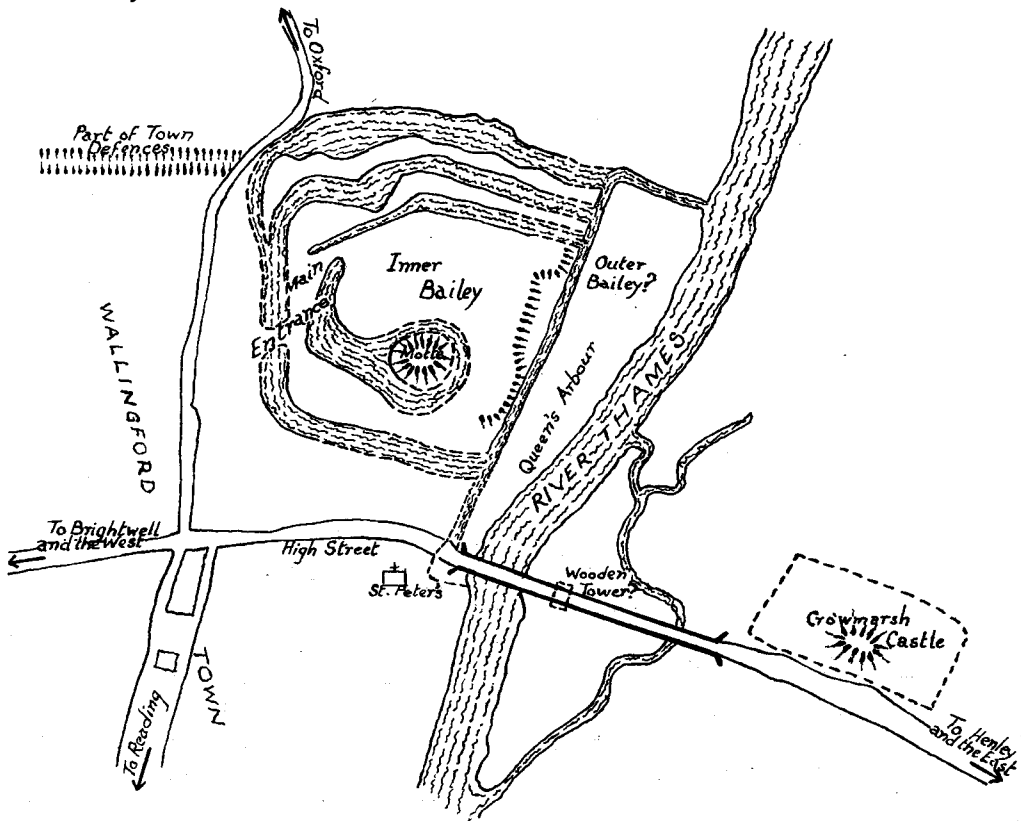

Fig. 1. Wallingford Castle. Plan. (Scale: approx. 190 yds. to 1 inch)

Parts of the twelfth-century defences are not accurately known, and these have their boundaries shown on the plan by broken lines. Certain of the problems could be solved by excavation, but some features have been destroyed by later building.

when King Stephen occupied the English throne. That reign is generally described by contemporaries as a period of unrest and confusion. But the churchmen to whom we owe the chronicles of the time had small understanding of the art of war, and in many cases were influenced by local troubles that had little connection with or effect on the main struggle.[1] This main struggle, reduced to its simplest terms, took the form of a contest between two parties with definite objectives, one to gain the crown for its leader the other to keep it, with each party using the accepted method for achieving its aim—warfare. Many of the men on both sides who carried out this fighting were masters of their trade, and would have risen to high command at any period. The King himself occasionally observed the punctilios of military etiquette;[2] but the great majority of those who commanded and fought, whether holders of lands or landless mercenaries, were hard and unsentimental with a firm practical grasp of the principles of war.

The two main features of warfare at this time were the pitched battle and the Castle. Pitched battles were few and frequently indecisive, so castles dominated the warfare of this period, especially as methods of defence had outrun methods of attack. The usual type of castle was the motte and bailey,[3] but the two generations that had passed since the Norman Conquest had seen great improvements over the palisaded mounds that had been flung up in the years immediately after 1066: time and the settling of the earth had made it possible in many cases for the original wood and earth of the defences to be replaced by stone. The majority of important castles were sited to dominate communications, especially river crossings or road junctions, and roads and tracks were vital for the movement of armies. The finer points of what may be called "castle strategy" still await investigation, but the role of a castle differed when it stood on its own or when it formed one of a group. In the former case it was an isolated strong-point, with its activities limited largely to its own protection and having a nuisance-value for the enemy. In the latter case the group would help contain the enemy by cutting communications over a wide area, and behind the screen formed by the castles an army could assemble.

Wallingford Castle was a motte and bailey construction, but a very efficient member of that type. King Stephen's barons, in 1139, regarded the walls as impregnable, and at no time do we hear of any attempt made to storm it. This suggests that its walls were of stone. It possessed a magnificent set of water defences, and the water-supply for the garrison was assured by a well in the motte. The water defences, the motte, and the inner bailey—measuring about 100 yards north-south by 170 yards east-west—are apparent; but there would seem to have been an outer bailey, for in 1145 the chronicler stated that Wallingford bridge was "the key to the Castle on that side". Such a bailey would include Queen's Arbour, and it possibly extended south to cover the end of the bridge. The lord of Wallingford in Stephen's reign was Brian fitzCount, who held the *honor* of Wallingford in right of his wife.[4] He was the

[1] This can be qualified slightly in the case of the author of the *Gesta Stephani*.
[2] As when besieging the Empress at Arundel in 1139.
[3] The motte was a mound of earth with defensive works on its levelled top; the bailey the defended area round the motte. The relationship of the two can be seen in the plan of Wallingford Castle.
[4] F. M. Stenton, *The First Century of English Feudalism*, Oxford, 1932, p. 235n. The *honor* included 100 knight's fees, and its holder was thus among the greatest feudal magnates.

natural son of Alan Fergant, Count of Brittany, had been brought up in the court of Henry I, and later served that King in various important posts. During Stephen's reign he remained unswervingly loyal to Matilda, daughter of Henry I and Stephen's rival for the throne, and was among her most important and trusted supporters.[1] He himself seems to have spent little time at Wallingford, the responsibility for which, as for most individual castles, fell on the constable. William Boterel, related to Brian on his father's side, seems to have been the constable during most of this period.

The earlier years of Stephen's reign were certainly not free from unrest, with fighting in the east, the west and the north of England, but these troubles were largely isolated one from another and included causes other than the disputed claim to the throne. In 1138, however, Robert Earl of Gloucester "defied" the King.[2] This Robert, illegitimate son of Henry I and thus Matilda's half-brother, was the key figure in the situation, for it was on his power, prestige and capability that her fortunes depended. Once he had defied the King it was realized that it was but a matter of time before the conflict for the throne began in earnest, and those who could began to build or strengthen castles, to provision them, and to organize forces for them —the inevitable prelude to twelfth-century warfare. The Earl himself was abroad, but he sent messengers with instructions that the garrison of Bristol, his main castle, should gather all possible provisions, should accept as allies all who came into them, and should act in hostile fashion against the King and his supporters.[3] Wallingford is mentioned by name as one of the castles being made ready;[4] and by 1139 the Castle had provisions for several years and was held by a strong and undaunted garrison, although its lord does not seem at this stage to have indulged in acts of open hostility against the King.

At this time of preparation the main threat to Stephen came from two groups of castles that lay across his communications with the south-east and the west. Wallingford was one of the western group that included Devizes, Sherborne, Malmesbury, Oxford, Marlborough and others of less importance, which threatened to pen Stephen into the area of the Thames valley. The threat, however, was not realized, for Matilda and Robert delayed their coming until the autumn of 1139 by which time Stephen had overcome the menace. He had an unearned success in August 1138 when the northern barons put to flight the Scottish army of King David, who favoured Matilda's cause. But is was his own activity that broke the groups of castles, so that those surviving, such as Wallingford, remained as individual strong-points rather than as units in a coherent scheme. Thus the best chance of Stephen's opponents to achieve speedy success had been lost before the Empress landed, but an attempt was made to distract the King. Baldwin·de Redvers[5] with a force from the continent

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[1] Brian was also a man of education, although this is not surprising in one brought up at the Court of Henry I. In 1141 or thereabout he wrote a letter, in latin, to the Bishop of Winchester, justifying his support for Matilda: E.H.R. xxv, pp. 297 *et seq.*

[2] William of Malmesbury, *Historia Novella*, Ed. Potter, *Nelson's Medieval Classics*, p. 23. "Defiance" was the legal renunciation of feudal obligations. Robert had married the heiress to the *honor* of Gloucester.

[3] *Gesta Stephani*, Ed. Potter, *Nelson's Medieval Classics*, p. 37.

[4] *Annales Monastici*, Rolls Series, Vol. ii, p. 51.

[5] In 1136 his forces in Exeter Castle had endured a three-month siege by the King before surrendering, and soon after shortage of water had obliged him to surrender his castle in the Isle of Wight to the King. As a result of this unsuccessful rebellion Baldwin had been exiled.

landed at Wareham and captured Corfe Castle in Dorset; and within the kingdom William de Mohun and John the Marshal, Lords respectively of Dunster Castle in Somerset and Marlborough Castle in Wilts, rose in rebellion.[1] The King was enticed into fruitless activity in the triangle marked by these castles, and while he was thus engaged Matilda and Robert came with a small force safely to Arundel Castle. The Lord of Wallingford took no share in these preparatory activities, but Robert, riding from Arundel to the west, met Brian near, or possibly at, Wallingford, and gladdened him with the news of Matilda's arrival.[2] As a result he sprang into immediate activity: he strengthened the already impregnable castle, brought many of the surrounding populace over to Matilda's side, and began to devastate all around.[3] His loyalty was greater than that of many castellans who, keeping within their fortifications, waited to see how things turned out.[4]

The strength of the Angevin party lay in western England and the centre of opposition was formed at Bristol, where it remained throughout the war. Bristol Castle was one of the most powerful in England, and Stephen never had a chance of carrying it by assault. The King's later strategy, when he was not called to the midlands or to eastern England, was to strike, if possible, against the core of opposition in the west. In this first phase, however, he conceived the obvious, but strategically unsound, plan of overcoming his enemies one by one; and Wallingford, the nearest of the major castles in opposition, was the first attacked.[5]

It was impossible to carry by assault a castle so strong and so well prepared, so the King based his hopes on a siege using the whole force at his command to form "a ring of besiegers that could not be broken". This would, of course, prevent movement to and from the castle, and the defenders could be harried by missiles from all angles. But it is difficult to see how Stephen hoped to achieve his aim, for the Castle was strongly garrisoned, its size made it no concentrated target, and there was no possibility that the main weapon of besiegers—famine—could affect the issue. Even under favourable circumstances a siege was likely to be long, and for some weeks Stephen was tied to the neighbourhood of Wallingford. This, in the existing situation, was dangerous in the extreme; and the leading men of his force had an unanswerable argument when they pointed out that the King was allowing his enemies to concentrate without opposition, and that he was running the danger of being caught between an army from the west and the defenders of the castle. They also stressed the point that the strength of the defences offered no prospect of a speedy termination of the siege, especially as the garrison had provisions for several years. The siege, therefore, was broken up, and in keeping with military practice of the day a garrison was left to check the activities of those in the castle. To house them two castles were built, but their location is not specified. Stephen's army seems to have been concentrated to the west of the castle—judging by the fears that he might be caught between two forces—and it is likely that his two castles were somewhere in this area. One is

[1] *Gesta Stephani*, pp. 54, 56; *Chronicle of John of Worcester*, Ed. Weaver, p. 55n.
[2] William of Malmesbury, p. 35; *Chronicle of Robert of Torigny*, Chronicles of the Reigns of Stephen, Henry II and Richard I, Rolls Ser., iv, p. 137.
[3] *Gesta Stephani*, p. 60; John of Hexham, *Symeonis Historia Coutinuata*, Rolls Ser., ii, p. 302; *Annales Monastici*, Rolls Ser., iv, p. 23.
[4] William of Malmesbury, p. 36.
[5] The authorities for this siege are *Gesta Stephani*, p. 61-2; John of Worcester, p. 56; Gervase of Canterbury, *Opera Historica*, Rolls Ser. i, p. 111.

described as "a wooden tower"—probably a motte with a palisade—the other as being a converted church. Wallingford had at least ten churches at this time,[1] but All Hallows, St. Peter's near the bridge, or Trinity Church would seem likely. If St. Peter's were one it is probably correct to place the other, the wooden tower, near the main gate of Wallingford Castle.

The siege had been little credit to Stephen, and this last activity was in keeping with the rest, for hastily constructed castles or castles adapted from existing buildings were of little military worth. Scarcely had he left his garrisons and moved away towards the west when Miles of Gloucester,[2] a firm supporter of the Empress and "a man of great spirit and very active and very ready for mighty enterprises" arrived unexpectedly by night. He killed, wounded or captured some of the King's troops and forced the rest to surrender.[3] Finally, while the King was busy, early in 1140, against Ely Castle, Earl Robert retook or destroyed the castles that the King had gained or built in the south. Among them the castle that the King had built against Wallingford was razed to the ground,[4] and the fact that no garrison is mentioned suggests that it had been abandoned after the activities of Miles, standing as a potential rather than as an active threat. The church that had become a castle had doubtless already reverted to its true purpose.

During the next six years Wallingford was not the scene of any set military engagement, not because peace came to a divided land but because great events were decided elsewhere. The battle of Lincoln in February 1141 resulted in Stephen's capture and his incarceration in Bristol Castle. Those of his followers who remained faithful fought as individuals from their own castles, Kent alone, in the hands of Stephen's Queen, remaining as a base of resistance. Matilda's cause rose as Stephen's fell; pressure on the "Angevin"[5] castles ceased, and the garrisons could move freely in areas where they had previously been limited to armed forays. Brian accompanied the Empress[5] on her short-lived triumph, and was with her in September 1141 when her army was defeated at the battle of Winchester. Her escape from this disaster was due largely to Brian who got her, half-dead with fear and exhaustion, to Devizes and thence to the west.[6] Inevitably both parties needed time to recover from this spate of events; and until the summer of 1142 the main happenings were the exchange of Stephen for Robert, who had been captured at Winchester, and the illness of both principals.

The royal party had won the last victory, and the fortunes of the Angevin party were at a low ebb, so low that an attempt was made to obtain support from Matilda's husband, the Count of Anjou. For this end Robert of Gloucester crossed the sea. He left his half-sister at Oxford with her followers sworn to protect her,[7] and she spent

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[1] *V.C.H. Berks.* III, p. 539.

[2] Under Henry I he was royal constable and castellan of Gloucester Castle. He was unswervingly loyal to Matilda, by whom he was made Earl of Hereford. He was killed in a hunting accident in December 1143.

[3] *Gesta Stephani,* p. 62.

[4] William of Malmesbury, p. 42.

[5] Matilda was by her second marriage the wife of the Count of Anjou: thus 'Angevin' is the description frequently used of her cause or party. Her first marriage was to Henry V of Germany who was also Emperor. He died in 1125 and Matilda soon returned home, but chroniclers of the time frequently describe her as the Empress.

[6] *Gesta Stephani,* p. 89; John of Worcester, p. 134. The author of *L'Histoire de Guillaume le Marechal* overrates the part played by John the Marshal in Matilda's escape.

[7] William of Malmesbury, p. 72.

the latter part of the summer in raiding the surrounding district and in organizing castles—Woodstock, Radcot, Cirencester, Bampton.[1] These helped cover her communications with the west, and, with castles already in existence such as Oxford and Wallingford, formed a threatening castle group. This activity roused Stephen from his "sluggish inaction".[1] In a blaze of energy he destroyed these new castles, advanced on Oxford, stormed the town, and besieged the Empress and her followers in the Castle. The siege lasted three months, until the Empress with some three companions escaped by night and crossed the frozen Thames and snow-covered country to Abingdon, where she obtained a horse to take her to Wallingford.[2] Her supporters had gathered there, but their morale was very low; and it was said that they feared to attack the strong defences of Oxford[3]—defences built by Robert of Gloucester to protect his sister. The Earl himself, recently returned from abroad, joined her at Wallingford, bringing with him her son Henry; and from here they all moved to the west country.

The escape of the Empress meant the surrender of Oxford Castle to the King, who did not again make the mistake of leaving this powerful castle under the control of a castellan of dubious loyalty. The possession of Oxford Castle, together with the slight edge that the King generally had over his opponents during the next few years, removed any necessity for the reduction of Wallingford until more urgent tasks were settled. But the inconclusive events of 1142–5 ended with an outstanding royal victory at Faringdon,[4] a victory followed by the coming over to Stephen of Philip, son of the Earl of Gloucester. These two events extended toward the west the area that looked to the King; and one reason for his turning against Wallingford in 1146 may have been his desire to eliminate pockets of resistance that remained. Another reason was to check the ravaging carried out from the castle.[5] But the surest reason would seem the coming over to the King of the Earl of Chester with a fine fighting force.[6] Rannulf Earl of Chester had played a dubious but successful part in the events of these times, and by 1146 held, it was reputed, almost one-third of England. The King could put no slight on so great a man, and his fighting force was a useful addition to any army; but his fickleness and instability were notorious. An attack on Wallingford would use the Earl's forces but would leave the King well within the area he controlled, so that another sudden change of allegiance by the Earl would not leave him betrayed in hostile territory.[7] Further, any activity against Wallingford would put the Earl in especially bad odour with the Angevin party. In the event there was no attempt to storm the castle, nor even to embark on a strict siege. Measures were taken to check the raiding that had been carried out from the castle; and the way eastward across the river was blocked by the construction of a castle at Crowmarsh. This was built on an impregnable site, was made of wood, and was "a work of wondrous toil and skill".[8] This well sited motte and bailey castle checked,

[1] *Gesta Stephani*, p. 92.
[2] William of Malmesbury, p. 77.
[3] William of Malmesbury, p. 74.
[4] *Gesta Stephani*, pp. 120–1; Henry of Huntingdon, *Historia Anglorum*, Rolls Ser., p. 278.
[5] *Gesta Stephani*, ibid.
[6] *Gesta Stephani*, pp. 121–2; Henry of Huntingdon, p. 279; William of Newburgh, *Historia Rerum Angli-carum*, Rolls Ser., i, p. 49.
[7] This possibility is further hinted in *Gesta Stephani*, pp. 128–9 when the Earl, after Wallingford, attempted to persuade the King to campaign against the Welsh.
[8] Contemporary writers refer to 'a castle'. The name is supplied by the later writer, Gervase of Canterbury, p. 129; but his work for this reign is based on earlier sources.

at least for a time, the forays of the enemy garrison, and its construction marked the end of the second siege of Wallingford.

A further six years elapsed before Wallingford again suffered a siege; and this would be a convenient place to consider the local activities of the garrison, although it is a subject for which little documentary evidence is in existence. The very fact that the castle held out presupposes good discipline and storekeeping; and it is likely that for reasons of health many of the garrison had accommodation in the town when the castle was not under siege. Even a large castle had but cramped quarters; and the chronicler of Abingdon Abbey complained that houses in Wallingford that belonged to the Abbey had been forcibly taken by knights from the castle.[1] Given the general unrest of the time it is safe to conclude that hardly a day can have passed without armed men entering or leaving the castle: reinforcements coming; wounded or war-weary departing; great men with their bodyguards first met and then escorted on their way; fugitives seeking refuge from defeat elsewhere. It is likewise reasonable to conclude that Wallingford town and its environs housed the flock of camp-followers that any military force of these times attracted to itself. But the main activity was that of the permanent garrison, issuing out in armed parties and returning later with their booty.[2] The "accustomed raids" that Stephen, in 1146, desired to check have already been mentioned, and we hear of them again in the early 1150s. At times, however, more ambitious operations were undertaken. In 1147, for example, one of the companions of Brian took "Lidelea" Castle, in Hampshire, the property of the Bishop of Winchester, by a trick, and from it grievously pillaged the Bishop's lands. It took a full-scale siege by the King to reduce it.[3] Many of the raids would be for plunder, the standard way of paying mercenary troops; but the higher ranks could plunder by more subtle and less strenuous means. Religious houses in this period, to preserve their estates, found it advisable or were forced to pay to holders of castles what can best be described as protection money; and in the case of Wallingford we have the specific example of Abingdon Abbey. The Abbot of that house paid the constable of Wallingford for the latter to keep his army off the Abbey lands. But when the constable, disregarding the agreement, plundered the Abbey's estate at Culham, Abbot Ingulf could get no satisfaction—apart from the excommunicating of his enemy—until William Boterel was on his deathbed.[4] There is no general description of the activities of the garrison of Wallingford; but that of the garrison of Bristol can be applied to the inmates of any castle:

> "The garrison, whenever they heard of lands or property belonging to the King or his supporters rushed thither greedily and quickly like starving and ravening dogs on a corpse that lies in their way: yokes of oxen, flocks of sheep, any object of desire that the eye beheld or the aspiring heart yearned for they seized and carried off, sold and consumed. When what was in the neighbourhood, lying under their hands as it were, seemed to have disappeared down the bottomless pit, they arrived speedily further afield where they heard of men with

[1] *Historia Monasterii de Abingdon*, Rolls Ser., ii, pp. 207–8.

[2] Brian, in his letter to the Bishop of Winchester, observed that as he had lost all he possessed he was compelled to resort to plunder to preserve the lives of himself and his followers: E.H.R. xxv (1910) p. 298.

[3] *Gesta Stephani*, pp. 138–9.

[4] *Hist. Mon. de Abingdon*, ii, pp. 230–1.

wealth or property, sometimes they dragged them off by force, sometimes lured them away by cunning; bandaging their eyes, also gagging them either by thrusting a lump of something forcibly into their mouths or by means of a device like a curb-bit with teeth in it that muzzled them, so they took them along blindfold and brought them to the castle: there they wasted them with hunger or delivered them over to tortures and extracted from them all they possessed, even to the uttermost farthing".[1]

There are similar descriptions by other writers, all stressing the plundering, the imprisoning and the torturing. The Lord of Wallingford possessed a notorious prison, the so-called Cloere Brien. We hear of it in 1142 after the battle of Wilton in which William Martel, one of the chief supporters of the King and steward of his household, was captured. He, we are told

" . . . was taken to Wallingford and placed in the custody of Brian who, hating William for the harm he had done him in military matters, made a special prison for him, saying sarcastically to him: 'Because you're called William Martel I'll make you a special bag which people call a cloera, so that the martellus (hammer) is put in the cloera (bag).' And putting him inside he treated him harshly."[2]

William got out on ransoming himself, but there were doubtless many in that prison who were not so fortunate.

It has already been mentioned that six years elapsed between the second and third sieges of Wallingford Castle. During these six years the whole strategic basis of the struggle changed, and by 1152 it was no longer a question of principal confronting principal, but of a King engaged in a series of operations against certain nobles who were keeping rebellion alive. Robert of Gloucester, the former mainstay of the Angevin cause, was dead; Matilda had retired to the continent; her eldest son, Henry, now the Angevin claimant to the English throne, was engaged in consolidating his position in his lands in France. In England, William, Earl of Gloucester, Robert's son, "advanced in years, effeminate, and more devoted to love than war",[3] did not provide even a nominal leadership for the Angevin party in England; and Roger, Earl of Hereford,[4] who assumed that leadership, possessed neither the resources nor the prestige to accompany his undoubted ability. Thus, as far as the dynastic struggle was concerned, the early 1150s saw the chief men of the Angevin party operating defensively from a series of strong castles; and the task of the King was to reduce them.

Wallingford was one of these castles, the garrison of which appears to have resumed its raiding. Oxford Castle checked movement from Wallingford towards the north, and it is probable that Crowmarsh Castle, impeding movement to the east, was still manned. At some time Stephen had built a castle to the west, at Brightwell;[5] and in 1151 the series was completed to the south by the construction of a royal castle in the grounds of Reading Abbey.[6] These castles, however, could offer little impediment

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[1] *Gesta Stephani*, pp. 41–2: see also pp. 102–3.
[2] Matthew Paris, *Chronica Majora*, Rolls Ser., i, p. 174; *Historia Anglorum*, Rolls Ser., i, pp. 268–9.
[3] *Gesta Stephani*, pp. 139–40. His age is less than implied, for he lived until 1187.

[4] The son of Miles of Gloucester who had defeated Stephen's force at Wallingford in 1139.
[5] Robert of Torigny, p. 174.
[6] Robert of Torigny, ibid.; Roger of Wendover, *Flores Historiarum*, Rolls Ser., p. 69.

to the movement of small, mobile bodies of skilled and determined raiders, especially as there was a strong Angevin Castle at Newbury. Reading and Brightwell Castles, in fact, were hasty erections that could put up little resistance; and in 1152 forces from Wallingford under the direct command of their lord destroyed them both.[1] But their success was short-lived, for Stephen's temporary inactivity had been due not to military weakness but to the death of his wife. When the King and his army did move they swept over southern England, ravaging lands, destroying castles and forcing adversaries to seek peace, until they came to a halt before Newbury Castle. This fell after a siege, and the attacking force pressed on to Wallingford. For this attack Stephen seems to have had one of the best armies of the reign: barons joined him from all over England, the Londoners sent a strong force, and the presence of his mercenaries can be assumed. But once again the facts of twelfth-century warfare rose above even the finest army; it made no attempt to storm the castle, but proceeded straightway to a siege.[2]

The dispositions of the two sides in this engagement are not easy to establish. It is doubtful whether the garrison attempted to hold the area within the town walls, for such would be too large and too vulnerable. On the other hand more than the motte and inner bailey were held, for we are told that the King "seized by force of arms the bridge at the entrance to the town, that was the master key not only to the town but to the castle on that side"; and that he built a fort on the bridge to prevent the movement of supplies and men to the besieged. It has already been mentioned that this suggests an outer bailey, and clearly an attempt was made to hold it. The task of the King's forces was to besiege the castle, and the most effective way to effect this, if no assault was intended was to cut it off from all contact with the outside. This would seem to be the reason why two castles were again built by the King. One was undoubtedly that at Crowmarsh, strengthened rather than built, the other probably near the main entrance. Placed like this these castles covered both entrances into the besieged castle. They also served as headquarters, and two were necessary when the army was divided by the river.

The siege was strictly pressed and all attempts by the Earl of Hereford to break it were defeated. For a time messengers could slip in and out of the castle, but eventually even this was impossible. Once again, however, the King could not await the completion of his efforts. He moved to Worcester; but his strength was now such that he could take an army elsewhere and yet leave a force sufficient to maintain a tight siege. That siege was continued during the remainder of 1152. It formed one of the compelling reasons that Roger Earl of Hereford gave in his letter to Duke Henry urging him to come and claim his kingdom—that many men were entering into agreements with the King; that the lands of the Duke's supporters were being stripped bare, and their castles, especially Wallingford, were besieged or threatened. In January 1153 Henry landed in England. A series of important campaigns and negotiations occupied him for some months, so, although he had earlier taken supplies to the hard-pressed garrison,[3] it was not until summer that he turned his full attention

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[1] Robert of Torigny, p. 174
[2] The main authorities for this siege are *Gesta Stephani*, pp. 156–8 and Henry of Huntingdon, pp. 287–8.
[3] Henry of Huntingdon, p. 286.

to the relief of Wallingford. His line of approach was on the Berkshire side of the river, and the lack of mention of the royal castle established here suggests that the garrison had fled. On the Oxford side, however, the wooden tower on Wallingford bridge and the royal castle at Crowmarsh were both manned. The wooden tower was captured, by surprise, by a small storming party led by the Duke in person; and of the soldiers holding it, twenty were captured and the rest thrown down.[1] The Duke then attempted to repeat the success gained by this surprise attack, but his objective, the Castle at Crowmarsh, was a more serious task and beyond the capabilities of a limited assault force. The attackers broke into the outer part of the castle, but the resistance they had overcome was designed to lead them into ambush. The bulk of the defenders, concealed in different places in small parties, rushed upon the assailants who, having just fought their way to their objective were especially vulnerable to counter-attack. Some were killed, some captured, and the rest of the Duke's assaulting force scattered in panic. But such an action could only gain a respite for a garrison fighting against an army, and the Duke proceeded to besiege the castle. It was probably in the engagement just mentioned that sixty archers of the garrison of Crowmarsh were captured. The Duke later had them beheaded,[2] but it is doubtful whether a man as intelligent as Henry would indulge in senseless cruelty: possibly he thought to intimidate the garrison; possibly the garrison had executed those of his troops it had captured.

The Duke's force besieging Crowmarsh enclosed itself in defensive works—probably ditch, bank and palisade—that extended to Wallingford bridge. Neither an entire army nor such defensive measures were necessary for the siege, which, in fact, was only part of a more far-reaching plan. The Duke's aim was to win a kingdom, not capture a castle. To accomplish this he had to force a meeting with his adversary; and the Duke's strategy was designed to force the meeting under conditions of his own choosing. His army was protected against surprise and could, in case of need, retreat behind the river; and the King was being forced to act. Not only was the Duke near the centre of Stephen's power, but he was besieging the King's castle. The ethics of the time demanded that the King should either permit those holding the castle in such hopeless circumstances to negotiate terms of surrender—which would mean a loss of prestige he could not afford—or attempt to relieve them. Stephen chose the second alternative, but apparently had not fully mobilized his forces; so he sent 300 cavalry under three picked commanders to Oxford, with orders to cooperate with the local barons in harrassing the Duke's forces. Possibly it was the activity of this force that led the Duke to fortify his camp. A certain amount of skirmishing took place with the balance of success going to the Duke, who beat off all attacks and captured a number of prisoners.[3]

The army that Stephen assembled seems to have been larger than the Duke's.[4] On news of its approach towards Crowmarsh the Duke demolished his fortified camp —probably to deny cover to the enemy—and withdrew to the Berkshire side of the

[1] Gervase of Canterbury, p. 153; Robert of Torigny, p. 174.

[2] Robert of Torigny, p. 173.

[3] Gesta Stephani, p. 157; Robert of Torigny, p. 174,

but the latter writer's account is confused.

[4] Henry of Huntingdon, p. 287. The Gesta Stephani describes it as 'huge'; Robert of Torigny as 'not very large'.

river,[1] leaving a small force holding a bridgehead on the Oxfordshire bank. But no general engagement followed. The Archbishop of Canterbury had already been in contact with the Duke and his leading men at Crowmarsh,[2] and the leading men on Stephen's side had no wish to fight. Their motives were doubtless mixed, but the outcome was the arranging of a five-day truce, during which the King, having evacuated the eighty men garrisoning it at the moment, should demolish his castle.[3] This was done. The King and Duke had a private interview—across the river where it was narrowest, according to Henry of Huntingdon—and the possibilities of peace were considered. Both forces then moved in different directions away from Wallingford, and the next meeting of King and Duke, in November at Winchester, was for reconciliation, not fighting. The terms of agreement were embodied in the so-called Treaty of Westminster that was drawn up late in December 1153.[4] It contained various clauses, including the following:

> "The men of the castles that I (Stephen) possess have on my order done homage and given surety to the Duke, saving the fealty they owe me while I live and reign. Those, however, who hold the castle of Wallingford have paid homage to me and given me hostages that they will keep faith."

Wallingford, be it noted, is the only opposition castle mentioned by name.

To sum up the part played by Wallingford Castle during this reign it is necessary to consider what can be called the strategic and the tactical aspects. Under the latter heading come the sieges of the castle and the activities of its garrison, both of which effectively demonstrate the techniques of twelfth-century warfare and the particular problems of Stephen's reign. In addition the castle was the scene of dramatic events and had a considerable nuisance-value. But, strategically, its role was not crucial. Wallingford Castle alone could never be a base for major offensive operations, and, alone, it blocked but one of the lines of communication with the west. There is nothing in the general history of Stephen's reign to suggest that this castle caused him any undue concern once he realized the strategic demands of the situation; although he certainly did his best to prevent the appearance of any other Angevin castles in its neighbourhood. In 1145 he launched a ferocious attack against the castle that the Earl of Gloucester had built at Faringdon; in 1142 he destroyed the castles built by the Empress, and captured Oxford Castle; in 1152 he took Newbury Castle. Thus its value for the Angevin party seems very largely symbolic: that this castle, thrust into enemy territory, should stand against all that could be brought against it. And stand it did, surrendering only to an honourable peace when the struggle was over. The part played by the men of Wallingford, whose town must have suffered severely, was signally recognized, in 1155, by a grant to the town of a Charter of Liberties, by King Henry II.

[1] *Gesta Stephani*, p. 157. Henry of Huntingdon, p. 287, states that the Duke drew up his army in battle order and moved against the King. This is hard to believe, and directly contradicts the *Gesta*. Possibly Huntingdon, who favoured the Duke, did not like to mention his retreat, sound tactics as it was. However, he manages to get King and Duke on opposite sides of the Thames during the next five days.

[2] *Registrum Antiquissimum*, Lincoln Record Society, I, p. 97; the *Peterborough Chronicle* also mentions the presence of the Archbishop.

[3] Robert of Torigny, p. 173 gives the duration of the truce and the numbers of the garrison.

[4] The earliest surviving text is that in the Gurney MS., now in the John Rylands Library, Manchester. See Hist. MSS. Comm., 12th Rep., App ix, p. 119.