

Kenilworth Castle Mere

19th century image of the castle The study combined a predominantly desk-based research project with selective field reconnaissance and photographic/metric survey. It was specifically targeted on the mere, the Tiltyard dam, Lower Pool and moats. The curtain walls were included at a later stage. The study of the curtain wall identified a possible early barbican near the north end of the dam and also indicated that various towers had been removed from around the circuit. The curtain wall is believed to be mid-13th century in date. The Tiltyard dam appears to have been raised in two main phases. The lower wider section could be contemporary with the construction of the castle in c.1120AD. At its north end a rectangular stone gateway was built in the early 13th Century. It is probable that this tower was linked to the raised ground south of the dam through a series of towers, drawbridges and bridges (possibly timber-built). The south end of the dam appears to have housed the sluices that controlled the level of the mere. The dam was raised and narrowed with a revetment wall to either side. This must have been undertaken as part of the creation of a larger mere and it makes sense that it was completed before the Pleasance was built in 1414 so boats could reach the dock here. A wall, that was later incorporated into the north wall of Leicester's Gallery Tower may be part of what was then called the Floodgate Tower, aligns with features bounding the Lower Pool. The wall may be the side of a sluice with the structures east controlling the direction of run off. There also appears to have been a gap between Mortimer's Tower and the outer bailey. It is possible that the higher level of the mere served to run the Castle Mill in the Brays and a mill sited on the east side of the dam (although the latter remains speculative). The alterations made by Leicester prior to Queen Elizabeth's visit in 1575 either concealed or obliterated the evidence of earlier structures along the dam. His Gallery Tower may well partly occupy the position of one of the earlier sluices. He may also have widened the raised narrow portion of the Tiltyard westwards. He moved the positions of sluices either creating or reusing the stone-faced deep channel at the south end of the dam. c1790 image of the castle Colonel Hawkesworth is known to have drained the mere and it is likely that this was finally accomplished through the breach in the centre of the dam. The presence of a channel in the base of the mere leading to the deeper channel at the south end of the dam could indicate that he was prudent enough to lower the level of the mere before breaching the dam in its centre. A long earthwork channel forming a leat, also shown on Fish's estate map of 1692, may have been constructed following the draining of the mere. It was clearly used to run the Castle Mill adjacent to the Brays. The mere, prior to it being drained, may have been fed the mill directly as indicated on Harding's map of 1628. The Earl of Clarindon made some alterations to Mortimer's Tower and the curtain walls in the early 19th century. However, the majority of later alterations occur in the mid-20th century after the castle was taken into care in 1937. Prior to this the Tiltyard dam was a wooded irregular earthwork bank with some masonry protruding. With the exception of the raised portion of the gallery Tower and Mortimer's Tower the remaining masonry structures along the dam were exposed in the 1950's and 1960's. Various excavations accompanied these and evidence for the various phases of sluices and levels of the mere became apparent. The major alterations were associated with turning the top of the dam into a causeway access to the castle. This involved filling the gap in the dam left by Colonel Hawkesworth after the stream had been culverted through three concrete pipes (in 1965), and then exposing and restoring various masonry structures associated with the Gallery Tower.

The study concludes that the evidence for early phases of the dam and the way in which it operated has been obscured by later features. However, combining information from the various fieldwork undertaken in this part of the site assists in the identification of some of these features. A number of problems relating to the development of the mere have not been resolved. Whilst it was originally believed that the increase in the size of the mere was associated with the building of the curtain wall, phasing of structures along the dam suggest that the larger mere may have been created at a later date.

Outline History Kenilworth castle has a reasonably well-accepted history. Whilst the focus of the study relates to the waterworks that surround the castle, these can not be understood without reference to the details of the ownership and main building phases of the castle itself. From a chronological viewpoint it could be argued that the entire castle would require assessment to enable the main building phases to be linked but this falls outside the scope of the project and it is considered that sufficient evidence has been gathered to satisfy the aim of the work. The key to understanding the mere lies partly in the definition of the use of the castle during its main periods of occupation. These are emphasised in the following sections. The castle as a fortification (1120-1346 AD) The de Clintons 1120-1182 AD Geoffrey de Clinton, Lord Chamberlain and Treasurer to Henry I and afterwards Justice of England founded the castle about the year 1120. He was succeeded by his son, another Geoffrey de Clinton, also Lord Chamberlain to the King. Henry II took over, and provisioned and garrisoned the castle in 1173-4. Subsequently, perhaps in 1182, Henry de Clinton made over the castle to the king in exchange for the manor of Lower Swanbourne. Kings Richard I and John 1189-1216 AD Set in order at the beginning of the reign of Richard I, much work was done under King John, who spent £1115 3s. 11½d. on the castle between 1200 (1210 according to Renn) and 1215. Kenilworth Castle should in fact have been passed back to the barons as part of the agreement of the Magna Carta, but, somehow King John retained this holding. Henry III 1241-1266 AD

Under Henry III the castle was neglected and a survey of 1241 showed the poor state into which it had fallen. This matter seems to have been remedied after Henry III appointed his brother-in-law Simon de Montfort, Earl of Leicester, as warden of the castle in 1244. Then in 1253 he granted the custody of the castle to Simon and Countess Eleanor for their lives. After the final defeat of the baronial party at Evesham in 1265, and the death of Simon de Montfort, His son another Simon garrisoned the castle at Kenilworth. The strength of the defences was such that it was disease that eventually caused the surrender of the garrison in December 1266 after a long siege. Prior to this even a water-borne assault using boats brought from Chester was beaten back. From the siege onwards 1266-1346 AD After recovering the castle, Henry III immediately granted it to his second son Edmund, Earl of Lancaster. In 1279 the famous concourse, called the Round

Table, was held here. During the event 100 knights engaged in tilting and other martial exercises under the presidency of Roger de Mortimer. When Edmund died in 1296, his son Thomas succeeded him. Earl Thomas was a leader of the opposition to Edward II, and in 1322 he rebelled against the authority of the crown and garrisoned the castle, which was then isolated by the sheriff. The earl was attainted and beheaded later in 1322 and the castle was taken into the king's hands. On 22 November 1326 Edward II was brought here as a prisoner by Henry, Earl Thomas's brother, and forced to abdicate. The castle as a palace (1347-1650) Creation of a palace and the house of Lancaster 1347 -1461

Earl Henry recovered the estates of his brother, and subsequently the castle was in the hands of his son Henry, later Duke of Lancaster, who spent 250 marks on the great hall in 1347. He died in 1361 and by the marriage of his daughter Blanche the castle passed to John of Gaunt, fourth son of Edward III, who was created Duke of Lancaster. After Blanche died in 1369 John of Gaunt remarried the daughter of Pedro el Cruel and became King of Castile and León. He then led long campaigns in France and Spain between 1369 and 1373 during which time he became increasingly unpopular in England. Following the death of the Prince of Wales in 1376 he virtually ruled the country until the senile Edward III died in 1377. He was then the royal administrator during the minority of Richard II and must have exerted more influence than the young king cared for as he was sent to Spain to try and capture the throne in 1386. He eventually returned in 1389 and from 1391 the castle was converted to a palace, at great cost. John of Gaunt died in 1399 and his estates passed to his son (from Blanche his first wife), Henry Bolingbroke, who seized the throne in the same year to become Henry IV. Thus the estates of the Duchy of Lancaster became royal estates.

Henry IV had married Mary de Bohun in 1386 and was created Duke of Hereford in 1397. Following a dispute with the Duke of Norfolk over accusations of treason he was banished from the kingdom for 10 years (shortened to 6) by Richard II. However, Richard was deposed in 1399 and in 1400 Henry had to deal with an unsuccessful revolt by the Barons. This was followed by the Welsh uprising led by Owen Glyndwr. From 1405 until his death in 1413 his reign was relatively untroubled.

Henry V is reputed to have built the 'Pleasance' on the bank of the great mere, west of the castle around 1414. He had served in a number of campaigns both at home (such as the battle of Shrewsbury in 1403) and an expedition to France. Clearly this stood him in good stead, for during the battle of Agincourt in 1415 he defeated an army three times the size of the English force. He was in England in 1416-17 and the Pleasance may have been completed in readiness for this period. He married the French King's daughter Catherine de Valois in 1420.

In 1456 Henry VI sent cannon to put the pleasance in a state of defence during the Wars of the Roses.

Henry VIII 1509-1547 AD

Building works in the reign of Henry VIII included the dismantling of the Pleasance and the subsequent re-erection of some of its buildings in the north-east corner of the outer part of the main castle. The Dudley's 1553-1603 AD In 1553 John Dudley, Duke of Northumberland, obtained a grant of the castle, but it reverted to the Crown on his attainder in the autumn of that year. Robert Dudley (referred to as Leicester), the Duke's son, was the well-known favourite of Queen Elizabeth I and in 1563 she granted Kenilworth to him as part of a large grant of estates, creating him Earl of Leicester in 1564. Within a few years he had started to modernise the existing buildings and construct new ones. When Queen Elizabeth visited the castle in July 1575 she was entertained in a lavish manner with feasting and pageantry. Leicester died in 1588 and the castle passed to his brother Ambrose, Earl of Warwick, and then, a year later, to Leicester's son Sir Robert Dudley. A dispute over his legitimacy led to the estate being seized by James I in 1603, at which time it was surveyed.

Before and during the civil war 1603-1650

Subsequently Sir Robert's wife conveyed the castle to Prince Charles, who in 1623-4 leased it to Robert, Baron Carey (later Earl of Monmouth). On his death in 1641 possession passed to his son Henry, the second Earl of Monmouth. At the beginning of the Civil War King Charles withdrew his garrison and the parliamentarians took possession. The castle as a residence and ruin (1650-1937) Civil war to restoration 1650-1660 AD

In 1650 the castle was again surveyed and Parliament ordered it to be dismantled. The estates were assigned to certain officers and troops for good service and arrears of pay, and the life interest held by Henry, Earl of Monmouth, was purchased by Major (later Colonel) Hawkesworth, who received the castle with the Tiltyard and orchard. A 1650 survey showed that the castle was still intact. However, it was subsequently dismantled and the materials sold. Hawkesworth turned Leicester's great gatehouse on the north side, into a residence.

The restoration to 1937

The lease was granted at the Restoration to the daughters of Henry, late Earl of Monmouth. In 1665 the castle and manors were granted to Laurence Hyde and then descended through his family, who were Earls of Clarendon in the first and second creation. Subsequently it became a farmhouse. The castle in care (1937-present) 1937-present

In 1937 the ruins of the castle were purchased by Sir John Davenport Siddeley, created first Baron Kenilworth, and were then put into the guardianship of H.M. Office of Works Thomas Harding's map of 1628 It is perhaps historical inevitability that fire destroyed the portion of the map containing the majority of features covered in this report. It is fortunate that the remainder survives, and a close inspection of the map indicates that at least some significant features relating to the castle can still be read around the burnt area. The map has clearly been produced to establish the sizes

and names of various plots of land. However, it is also the only original illustrative source that dates from before the Tiltyard Dam was breached. The accuracy of the map in its depiction of the relationship between details appears to be reasonably sound. For example the shape of the south edge of the mere reflects the modern-day topography. The road runs around the Brays and the extent of the mere can be seen to the west, east and north. More particularly the map does not appear to have depicted masonry features that relate to the castle. It restricts itself to the edges of plots, roads and water features. As it is the latter that is of interest then a number of significant features emerge, whilst others are absent, such as the leat that runs from the Inchford Brook at the south-west end of the mere to the Brays ditch. The map depicts an outflow at the south end of the dam into the mill pools which is met by water feeding around the Brays, also apparently fed from the mere. A plot of land to the east of the dam is shown as The Orchard (encompassing 3 acres, 2 roods, 20 perches). The map also shows the east side of the castle (although it may in fact be depicting the moat rather than the curtain wall here, as the colour is similar to that used to depict water elsewhere on the map). It does not show the Pleasance (which had been demolished by this time), but does indicate the harbour associated with this feature, indicating that a considerable detail of mapping had been employed for those types of features. A small circular mark on the south-east edge of the watercourse around the Brays could depict a mill wheel indicating the site of a mill here. One further point of significance is the position where the Inchford Brook meets the south end of the mere. The mere is depicted as continuing further south to the east of this point. James Fish's map 1692 The most striking aspect of this map is the level of detail. Starting at the south-west end of the mere the map clearly illustrates the point where the stream must have originally entered the mere as the brook follows a meandering path along the field boundary (and was subsequently canalised). The linearity of drainage features is a characteristic of the ancient mere bottom, demonstrated by all the stream courses within it. It is interesting that a drain was also apparently cut up to the harbour for the Pleasance implying that the network of channels was more than simply a means of conducting flowing water across the silted base of the former lake - it also aided drainage for the surrounding ground. The line of the leat is shown south side of the area previously occupied by the mere. It joins the Inchford Brook down stream of the point where it once met the mere and is depicted as an earthwork feature running to the Tiltyard Close (Brays) and running around the Brays into a mill pond feeding a mill that appears to straddle the watercourse on the east side of the Brays. The Castle Orchard on the site of the Lower Pool is recorded as covering 4 acres 24 perches with the Tilt yard measuring 2 roods and 8 perches. It is significant that no gap is shown where the stream passes through the Tiltyard Dam on this map. The level of detail at this point is sufficient to show that the watercourse was bridged on the west side of the dam. The castle is shown with all its main features including the extension to the east of Leicester's Gatehouse, the barn along the inside of the east curtain wall and what is possibly the south curtain wall of the outer bailey. This latter feature joins the Tiltyard at a point south of where the western stretch of wall meets it. To the north of the castle a further channel is shown. This has been depicted in the same fashion as the leat on the south side of the former mere but doglegs first west and then south on an east-west field boundary to the east of Pingle. However, hatchures depicting a bank continue along the original line of the feature on the east side of the fields here ending at the Swan Tower. A pool of water is shown occupying the moat to the east of the castle, but no channels feed this and there is no outlet from it.

Dugdale's plan and its copies Dugdale published the first detailed plan of the castle in 1656 and this was subsequently copied and altered by various authors, most notably Grose. Care then has to be taken in distinguishing later copies from these originals. From the documents in the ministry of works files (WORK 14/2441 & 77585) alongside various other copies there are two plans matching Dugdale's and Grose's (K1640 and K1641). Leicester's Gatehouse is placed behind the curtain wall on K1640, however, the remaining features along the curtain wall are similar. This plan is a later copy, predominantly from Dugdale on the basis of its layout, altered to show the modern-day relationship between the features, but incorrectly assuming that Dugdale's plan showed the gate house in the wrong place (in fact the curtain wall was rebuilt on a different line). Two towers are shown on the south curtain wall in both Dugdale and Grose, the former shows closed backs to these. The curtain wall runs to meet the back of Mortimer's Tower in both cases. Dugdale's plan has some further features of significance, not least the square tower with a rear doorway shown on the north curtain wall & a feature that was rediscovered during excavations in the 1960's. A further difference between Dugdale and Grose is the position of a possible sluice marked on the west side of the dam on Dugdale's plan. It may be that Grose adapted details to match the extant remains in the early 18th century.