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Berkeley Castle

by Earl Berkeley
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BERKELEY CASTLE

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I HAVE been engaged for a considerable time in putting on record the main discoveries lately made at Berkeley Castle, which will be offered for publication in the *Transactions*. Owing to various causes I have not been able to complete them for the present volume, but on reading Mr St. Clair Baddeley's paper¹ it seems to me imperative, in the interests of archaeology, to point out at once the numerous errors he has fallen into. I deal with the paper page by page, and to assist in reference will, where necessary, quote the actual statements I wish to correct.

Page 135, line 18. 'Nor is either motte or ditch around the keep anywhere to be traced at Berkeley'. On the contrary I have found the ditch close to and under the walls on the north and west sides. As to the motte or mound: this is a matter of opinion, but I may say that none of the foundations of the numerous remains found inside the keep wall go down lower than about 10 feet above the ground outside—some of them indeed are 15 feet above. No practical builder would have built the arcaded cross wall (which I discovered and of which later) on a newly thrown-up mound.

Page 136, line 6. 'That feature [inner ditch] was deliberately sought for, and even dug for, in 1918-20' is not correct.

'There is no trace of the fourth semicircular bastion' (p. 136, line 11). This *was* sought for but no foundations could be found; on the contrary the ditch ran close under Thorpe's tower.

¹ Berkeley Castle, *Transactions*, xlviii, 133.

Smyth implies that the curtain wall (p. 137, line 11) was built by Maurice I. There are no springs in the moat (note 12).

Page 139. 'To that period (c. 1110-40) we think the Norman hall . . . belonged'. The moldings of the window arches proclaim the date as c. 1180: incidentally the phrase 'with an ample vestibule' (page 140, line 4) is without warrant.

Page 140, line 6. 'The few surviving and fragmentary mouldings . . . of earlier Norman style than belonged to the days of Fitzharding'. As already stated they date from 1180.

Page 140, line 5 from bottom. 'it [the chapel of St. Mary] has lately (1923) had its door . . . filled with a French fireplace . . .' The jambs of this doorway were of rough Severn stone (no trace of ashlar) and did not reach to the chapel floor, which was some 18 inches below the sill. It is therefore relatively modern, but an earlier doorway was found in the wooden studding, which supports the head of an arch (discussed below). It is worth recording that since Henry VII's time, the family and their guests have used the Baron's seat for devotional purposes, so that the doorway in question was the servants' entrance and was not entered by the 'sixteen sovereigns'.

Page 140, line 2 from bottom. 'Some other fragments of even primitive Norman work were discovered (July 1923) . . .' This alludes to a fragment found in the east wall of the east tower of Thorpe's towers,—it was behind the present re-faced wall, and formed a lintel over a window. This stone lintel was not in its original position, its decorated face being concealed by other lintels. The Saxon fragment was found under the floor of the priest's room adjacent to St. Mary's chapel.

Page 140, note 20. 'It [the Norman hall] is related to have been re-roofed . . . c. 1497'. The only authority for this that I can find is in Shrapnell's notes where he says 'repaired against the coming of King Henry VII to

Berkeley by the command of the Lady Berkeley, and the Great House at Wotton furnished the materials in lead etc. (*sic*)'. There is no mention of the great hall nor of re-roofing it; Shrapnell paraphrases Smyth.² In fact it is abundantly clear that the principal timbers are contemporary with the building.

The arch mentioned in the penultimate paragraph is round-headed and lies in the north wall opposite the western-most window of this chapel. The west side of the arch is missing; indeed the wall on which it rested has gone, but the eastern jamb together with half the head are still extant, and from these we are able to estimate its span as about 9 feet. There is however no indication of a rebate for a door, hence the arch was not the entrance to an ordinary room.

The base of the eastern jamb, formed of a single stone of the same width (2 feet) as the wall in which it lies, is about 2 feet below the present floor and there are no traces of steps. These two facts enable us to postulate a floor at about this level; this is confirmed by the discovery of the same floor level under the window opposite, where the remains of the sharply splayed sides of a narrow window way were exposed. Below the present floor there was also found on this south wall, about 6 feet east of a line passing north and south through the centre of the arch, the remains of a pilaster which may have formed part of the decoration of the room. Thus the room was some 11 feet by 18 feet in area and may have been the chancel of an earlier chapel running north and south.

Be this as it may, the chronological sequence seems fairly plain. The 'chancel' can be dated to about the middle of the 13th century from the moldings on the arch. It was superseded by a chapel running east and west, of which the aisle, cut out of the curtain wall, formed part, dated by the pilaster capitals to *c.* 1300; and the floor

² Smyth, *Lives of the Berkeleys* (ed. Maclean), ii, 145.

rested directly (as does the present floor) on the vaulting of the beer cellar—there is only 6 inches between them—so we may take it that this vaulting was also built in 1300 ; but as some of the corbels, supporting the groining, seem somewhat earlier we must suppose old material was re-used. The next alteration is the present roof, which may be as late as 1340.

Page 142, lines 4-6. I have found no evidence whatever for saying that the keep originally stood quite free of the curtain wall.

Page 144, line 7. 'The latter [semi-circular turrets], within, do not descend below (outer), plinth-level, but end short of the level of the inner court . . .' This is totally incorrect. The bottom of all three bastions, as far as they have been disclosed, lie some 10 feet below the ground outside them. They go right down to and below the water level.

Page 144, line 16. 'But a fourth turret . . . was finally demolished'. As already stated there is no evidence for the existence of this bastion, nor was it 'demolished', indeed Smyth states that Thorpe's tower was 'ruinated' and 'built of newe', which probably, in this case as in others, means rebuilt.

Page 145, line 5 from bottom. 'For we find (1364) Pope Urban v's licence from Avignon granted to the owners to make the more convenient chapel of St. Mary'. As far as I am aware the only licence of 1364 is that given in Jeayes³ who says it 'grants forty days indulgence to all those who shall worship or make benefactions to the Chapel of the B. V. Mary and St. John in Berkeley Castle'. It says nothing about making a chapel, indeed it implies that the chapel is already in existence. As already indicated on p. 185 there seems to be some evidence for postulating an earlier chapel on this very site ; the lack of accommodation in the keep chapel makes it almost a certainty.

³ *Catalogue of Muniments at Berkeley*, p. 170.

Page 147, line 2. 'The piers of these [arches of cross-wall] descend to their footings upon a stout wall'. The piers have but scant traces of footings and do not rest upon a wall nor do they descend lower than 10 feet above the courtyard outside.

Page 147, last two lines (bottoms of dungeons). Already shown incorrect.

Page 147, note 34 (entrances to dungeons). On the contrary there was distinct evidence of a large opening into one of the dungeons just below the present ground level of the keep.

Page 147, note 35. At the bottom of this dungeon there was found a round-headed archway the head and jambs of which are of dressed freestone. It lies completely below the courtyard level and forms an opening some 7 feet high leading out through the base.

Page 148, line 5. The 'ground-core' as far as it was investigated is all of made up soil.

Page 148, line 16. 'all the floors or storeys of the keep will have been vaulted'. The evidence afforded by the remains of piers and other structures parallel to the cross-wall show no signs of vaulting nor are there any traces of the abutments in the walls. We may therefore take it that the floors rested on cross-beams which, by the by, imply a roof to protect them.

Page 148, last par. The evidence is that the curtain wall is of *c.* 1180 while the keep is *c.* 1150.

Page 149, line 16 ff. In the steward's accounts for 1756 there are two items of payment for 'building the new muniment room'. This can only refer to the building of the brick arch under the floor of the chapel and to building the west wall, for the mortar of these structures was unmistakably of the middle of the 18th century. Furthermore, Shrapnell in his notes, dated 1804, speaks of 'the chapple of our Lady (*sic*) now the evidence house'.

Page 149, line 21. Mrs Atherley was not 'née Grenville Berkeley'; her father's christian name was Grenville.

She could not have ' vividly recollected the former appearance of the chapel ' for it was a complete ruin and roofless long before she was born—it is shown thus in Kip's engraving in Atkyns' *Gloucestershire* (1712), p. 260.

Page 150, par. 1. Nearly the whole of this paragraph is incorrect. ' The former acute-arched west-door (transitional) was 'enriched with a single chevron on jamb and arch ' (line 21). This doorway had no chevron on arch or jamb; it was modern, as was evident from its materials and was confirmed to be so by an authority who saw it before pulling down; in fact as already stated the whole wall was modern (see Kip's engraving) and was made up of old discarded freestone and bricks. Probably the Cromwellian guns battered down the front of the chapel together with the vaulting.

A word however must be said about the ' stone stair that mounted within the wall-thickness and led up directly . . . ' (line 3). The wall which separates this recess from the chapel is 16 inches thick and the level of the chapel floor (that built in 1756) is 3 feet 7 inches above what might be taken for the last step of a stairway (this is only a 6-inch projection of mortared rubble clinging to the aforesaid wall). It is difficult therefore to see how access to the chapel could be gained other than by a ladder: an examination of the separating wall on the chapel side (before the restoration) showed traces of a small opening only, which may have been the remains of a hagioscope built to allow prisoners to see the elevation of the host.

On the other hand it may plausibly be maintained that the original level of the chapel floor was much lower; but there seem to be very considerable difficulties here, for in that case it is hard to see how access from the old floor of the keep (which was only 2 feet 5 inches below the 1756 floor) to the well-head was obtained. Of course steps running downwards outside the wall may be postulated, although no remains were found; but a wooden floor

across the well-head, resting on a rebate some 7 feet below the 1756 brick arch was found ; so the probability is that here was the original well-head and the 1756 floor level was substantially at the level of the old floor.

I will deal with ' characteristic stone chamfered bench ' of line 13 later on.

' Traces of band and chevron colour decoration ' (line 24). I have no recollection of this ; but, in any event, the plaster had to be removed to enable the workmen to repair the large cracks which extended from top to bottom of this bastion.

In this connexion I may point out that fig. 3 (p. 151) is incorrect. The actual distance from the chapel to the nearest jamb of the archway which gives access to the firing loop, is 58 inches. This distance is much too short for the numerous steps shown in the drawing. Also the untouched stone jambs of the centre window (by untouched I mean not disturbed in modern times) indicate that this window was wider than the others and that the splay started from some 8 inches in from the edge of the jamb.

Page 150, line 26. ' Not one trace of history has now (1926) been left '. It is difficult to characterize this statement in a charitable manner otherwise than by saying that Mr Baddeley's imagination has out-run discretion. Every single trace of history, which was apparent before the recent restoration, has been preserved.

I would ask the reader to compare the words quoted at the head of this paragraph with those of line 7 p. 152, where it is said that ' perhaps no more than ten stones (since 1923) have escaped re-dressing ' ; the incompatibility between the contents of these two phrases will enable him to estimate the credence to be given to Mr Baddeley's statements.

Page 151, note 41. ' We get such references as the following (1321) to this chapel of St. John '. This reference is on p. 203, vol. 1 of Smyth's *Lives* (Maclean) and

only mentions 'the Chapple of this Castell of Berkeley', which may equally refer to St. Mary's.

Page 152, paragraph beginning on line 5. Not a single stone has been re-dressed; and the two views, figs. 7 and 8, are purely imaginary reconstructions. They are, I expect, derived from drawings by Shrapnell which I lent to Mr Baddeley. Curiously enough Kip's engraving in my copy of Atkyns' History bears a note in Shrapnell's handwriting, stating that the keep chapel was destroyed by the parliamentary forces during the siege.

Page 152, note 45. It is difficult to understand why Mr Baddeley says 'the non-noble male Fitzhardings'. Why 'non-noble'? Most historians accept Freeman's pedigree showing that Robert was the grandson of Alnod, a thegn who was master of the horse to Edward the Confessor and later; this in itself implies nobility; but his son Harding, according to Freeman⁴ was a thegn holding lands in Somerset and Gloucester; and according to Smyth he was also provost of Bristol—'a fiscal officer of the Crown'.⁵ So apparently the Rogers de Berkeley were noble because they were kings' provosts but their contemporaries were not!

Page 153, line 20. 'Within, the room [Edward II's] has been repanelled'. The room is not panelled and never has been, as far as one can see.

Page 153, last line. 'The present passage, really a timbered balustrade-gallery', etc., is considerably older than the 17th century—the form of the balusters and the gothic timbered arches which support the roof, are a clear proof.

Page 154, last par. The blocked-up triangular arch is a relieving arch placed over the doorway giving access to a latrine, the shaft of which goes down to below the outer ground level and runs behind the pilaster strip; the wall hereabouts was in a very dangerous state and

⁴ *Norman Conquest*, iv, 760.

⁵ *Lives of the Berkeleys*, i, 19.

doubtless both arch and pilaster were meant to strengthen it—it is unlikely that the stairs giving access to the floors above would have run by the latrine.

Page 158, line 1 and onwards. Mr Baddeley's contention that the north-east part of the present curtain wall is not original seems negatived by five facts. (1) The mortar of this wall is precisely similar to that of the undoubted portion of the curtain. (2) If this wall had passed through the present billiard room it would have abutted on the keep right in front of the entrance thereto, which is most unlikely. (3) When cutting a subway across the billiard room, no foundations of such a wall were found, nor were there any in an excavation made to determine the position of the drawbridge in front of the aforesaid entrance. (4) It is a pity that when 'our eyes' were scanning 'every nook and loophole', etc.,⁶ they did not notice the Norman pilaster on the 'still room' wall, for they might have then realized that by no possibility could the curtain wall have returned on itself (so to speak) to pick up the kitchen in its progress towards the keep.⁷ (5) They might also have noticed that the building, dated by Mr Baddeley to 1290–1310,⁸ has a vertical upper and outer wall, but it is built on a wall that leans outward markedly⁹—thus showing that the lower part is considerably older.

Page 158, line 4 from bottom. We know now that the ditch extended right in front of the entrance to the courtyard, and there is every reason to believe that the arches forming the gateway are *in situ* and of *c.* 1200.

Page 159, last paragraph. It is unlikely that the round arch mentioned was an open one; for not a jamb stone could be found. It may be worth while pointing out that this wall is composed, down below, of two vertical

⁶ Page 169.

⁷ See plan opposite p. 133.

⁸ It is more probably *c.* 1285.

⁹ I have to thank Mr G. O'Flynn for this observation.

strips ; the courtyard strip is probably of early date, in fact of the same date as the wall of the small drawing room ; the next strip is later ; and above the leads, the piece close to and on the curtain wall is earlier still. This piece formed part of a guard-room (probably projecting out from the curtain wall ; see old engravings), one of the door jambs of which was found *in situ*. The round arch may therefore be a true relieving arch to distribute the weight of the lead roof on to the two older walls.

Page 160, line 4. 'The immense outer (s) stone buttress . . .' This, judging by the stones of which it is built, can be dated no earlier than the 15th century.

Page 163, line 11. The appointment, dated 5 August 1810, of the 'humble surgeon' to be deputy constable of the castle is signed by the 5th Earl's eldest son, subsequent to that Earl's death.

Page 172, line 1. 'A skull was found at the bottom'. Mr Baddeley is misinformed, no skull was found here in 1922, nor, as far as I know, at any other time.

Page 172, line 15. 'We last examined it [St. John's chapel] on 6 August 1923 . . . and almost all the ancient stone bench was in site'. The bench could not have been seen because it was not in existence. Not only am I positive on this point, but Mr Keeble, Mr Bruce, Mr Spooner are equally sure about it. Mr Keeble is the head of the firm who carried out the restoration and has personally attended to the plans therefor ; Mr Bruce is my estate Clerk of the Works and on many occasions has done work in the chapel ; while Mr Spooner is Messrs. Keeble's foreman who superintended the work and aided Mr Keeble in taking the measurements necessary for it.

In the remainder of the paper there are frequent repetitions of the points that I have already shown to be incorrect, but sufficient has been said to enable the reader to discount them.

A brief summary of the facts against one of Mr Baddeley's main hypotheses will, however, not be amiss.

In essence his argument is that consequent on Edward II's murder (by the by was he murdered ?) the main life of the place was shifted from the keep to the bailey. The evidence against this is clear. The Norman banquetting hall was elaborately decorated (probably built) in *c.* 1180, *after* the keep had come into existence ; such decoration would not be done except for use and enjoyment, and, if we remember that the minimum size (in approximate figures) of this hall was 50 ft. long by 25ft. wide and 22 ft. high, we have a place of assembly large enough for 150 people to sit down to dinner at tables lining the walls.

It should be mentioned that the above width of 25 feet is hypothetical ; I estimated it from the observed traces of decoration, on the assumption that the ceiling had been in the form of a semi-circular vaulting, one side of which rested on the curtain and the other on a wall running parallel to it, but later work failed to find the foundations of this latter wall. It may be that the vaulting was of pointed arches and that the hall consisted of two aisles supported inwardly by a row of piers and enclosing the same area as the present hall.

The existing groining in the scullery, in the billiard room, at the entrance to 'The Screens' and in the beer cellar and lobby outside, together with traces of it (which I have carefully preserved) in the servants' hall and butler's room, show considerable building activity. Most of these buildings were in being before 1300 and as they must have been meant for habitation we can safely say that the centre of the castle life lay here. Thus Mr Baddeley's flight from the keep took place years before Edward II's death.