RAVENSWORTH CASTLE AND ENVIRONS

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY REPORT

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INTRODUCTION

Ravensworth Castle is located at NZ 142 076 in a large field of low-grade pasture at the south-east end of the village of Ravensworth in North Yorkshire, about 7 km to the north-north-west of Richmond and 1.5 km to the south-west of the A66 trunk road. It comprises the severely robbed remains of a stone-built castle surmounting an enhanced natural mound within low-lying marshland. The castle lies towards the north perimeter of a deer park within which are a number of earthworks, including the remains of enclosures, a dam, some fishponds and some evidence of garden landscaping.

Background to the survey

Following a request from English Heritage for a large-scale plan and interpretive text to assist in the management of Ravensworth Castle, staff from the RCHME Newcastle office completed a survey during May 1997 with assistance of personnel from Northern Archaeological Associates as part of a training exercise. The castle mound itself was surveyed at 1:500 scale but, as the outer earthworks are extensive, it was decided to produce a plan at 1:1000 scale of all of the outworks within the pasture field, covering a total of about 18 hectares.

Control points and most of the 'hard' detail were supplied by a traverse of six stations with a Wild TC1610 total stations theodolite. The data was processed using Mathshop survey software and plotted at the two scales on a Calcomp automatic plotter. This control plot was then taken into the field and details of the earthworks were added by a combination of graphic and plane table methods, for which a Wild RK1 self-reducing alidade was used.

History of the castle

The history of the castle has been examined in detail by Ryder (1979, 81-3); this is summarised below.

There is no record of the original foundation of the castle though there is a record of a visit by King John in 1201. This at least signifies that a dwelling of some size and importance, possibly a timber phase of the castle, was present on the site at this time. It became the seat of the Fitzhugh family and remained with them until 1512.

The name Fitzhugh was first assumed by Henry Fitzhugh I during the 14th century. His son, Henry Fitzhugh II (Lord Fitzhugh), was granted a licence in 1391 to enclose 200 acres of land around the castle as a park or as an extension to a pre-existing park. The architecture of the surviving buildings suggests to Ryder that these activities included the rebuilding of the castle itself. A chantry dedicated to St. Giles was founded in 1467 within the chapel (itself dedicated to St John the Apostle) by the 6th Baron Fitzhugh; the Fitzhughs were benefactors of Brough St Giles Hospital at Brompton on Swale (see Cardwell 1995). When the Fitzhugh line came to an end with the 8th Baron Fitzhugh in 1512 the estate was split between an aunt, Alicia (wife of Sir John Fiennes), and a cousin, Thomas Parr, Lord of Kendal. Thomas Parr passed it to his son William, Earl of Essex,

who died in 1571 without issue and his estates passed to the Crown.

In the mid-sixteenth century the castle was visited by the antiquary Leland who reported that

> *the castle, excepting two or three towers, and a faire stable, with a conduct coming to the hall side, had no thing memorable* (quoted in Ryder 1979, 83).

From this information it is conjectured (Whitaker 1823, 123-4) that the buildings were already in a state of decay with only two or three towers still standing. By 1600 in a reference from Camden,

> *Ravensworth Castle rears its head with a large extent of ruined walls* (quoted in Ryder 1979, 83).

An insight into why the castle became ruinous so quickly is given by a report of a Special Commission of 1608,

> *touching the Manor and Castle of Ravensworth. On the 14th April, 5 Jas. I. James Foster of Ravensworth, aged sixty years, was examined, and deposed that within these last 6 yrs there were 10 wayne loade of stone carried from the castle of Ravensworth, some of them piked fiorth of the walles of the said castle, and some of them pulled furth of the gate-howse tower, which stones were carried away by Sir Francis Boynton's men, James Ponsonby being the bailiff of the manor; and he saith that there hath been divers stones cast down from the gate-howse tower by said Ponsonby's brother and by him the said Ponsonby, and converted to his own use; and he further saith that divers persons at divers and sundry times have taken and carried away stones from the said castle without leave or asking, but what will repair the damages made in the said castle by the said Ponsonby he cannot depose; he also stated that many trees had been cut down and taken away, etc. Several other witnesses deposed to the same effect as above* (*ibid.*).

After the Special Commission's report the castle was passed into the hands of Edward Dichfield and other trustees. The ruins evidently continued to be used as a stone quarry over the next two centuries. An engraving published by Grose dated *c* 1790 (in Ryder 1979, 84) shows the castle in much the same state of disrepair as it is today with all structures ruinous. Parts of the west tower, the east tower and the upper part of the belfry tower all fell in the early part of the 20th century at some time after the publication of the OS 1:2500 map of 1914.

At the time of the 1778 Enclosure Award (NYCRO 1539/475) the area of the survey was split into many small intakes, some of the boundaries of which are visible as earthworks. The 1841 Ravensworth Tithe map shows that the area was split into three fields; the west-east boundary, visible today as a line of trees with a broken stone wall, can be seen on aerial photographs to have persisted as a boundary until 1946 at least (RAF 106G/UK1170 5010-1)

During the 20th century little has affected the remains of the castle; the marsh has been reduced in size by draining and the fields used as permanent pasture. At one point the interior of the castle was used as a dump for the village and there remain still piles of ash,

some of which is exposed in rabbit scrapes.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL DESCRIPTION

The castle mound

There was almost certainly an earlier, probably timber, phase to the castle, and the form of the castle mound as seen today is a direct reflection of this early work with the later masonry castle superimposed upon it. The mound is an enhancement of a pre-existing natural knoll surrounded on all sides but the north by low-lying ground. This is now marsh, containing a reed-fringed pond; it may have been waterlogged at the time when the castle was built and as such would have provided a good natural defence.

The castle mound measures 145m from the north-east to the south-west by about 82m transversely at its widest point, within a heavily silted moat. The mound is uniformly 3.0-3.3m high above the surrounding moat and is flat-topped, apart from a ditch which crosses it, and the robbed remains of the later stone-built structures. The original profile of the moat is unknown; it is now silted and flat-bottomed, containing marsh vegetation. Its width varies from about 8.0m to approximately 19.0m at its widest point. Around the north corner the moat is most distinct, having been cut to isolate the original natural knoll from rising ground to the north some 3.2m above the base of the moat. Elsewhere around the periphery the marsh has impinged upon the moat and the counterscarp bank which defined the outer edge, at best 0.7m high, has in some places been totally overwhelmed.

There remains some question as to the development and function of the moat during the occupation of the castle from the ealiest times to its abandonment, and this will be discussed later. However, an element in the conversion of the natural knoll to a defence would have been the cutting of a moat in such a way as to steepen the flanks of the knoll and to provide material to flatten the summit area.

The interior of the castle mound has been so altered by the building of the stone phase and its subsequent robbing that apart from the cross-ditch there is little evidence of features that could date from the presumed earlier timber phase. However, on the north corner of the southern platform is a large grass-covered mound, standing 1.5m above the interior; there is no stone visible in the mound nor is there any sign of the later curtain wall or its robber trench. It is possible that this could be the remains of a corner tower from a timber phase though it is more likely to be a feature of more recent date.

The ditch crossing the castle mound from the north-west to the south-east splits it into two enclosures. That to the north-east nearest to the village is rectangular in shape, measuring 75.0m by 45.0m, and the south-western part is roughly oval in shape, measuring 94.0m by 73.0m. The ditch is in two parts, divided by an earth causeway; it is not clear whether this causeway is an original feature or a later modification. The north-western part of the ditch is 'U-shaped', measuring 9.5m across by 1.3m deep, while the eastern section is less well defined, being covered by a large ash dump.

Though the ditch was probably an early feature contemporary with the postulated timber

phase the form of the earthwork is unlike a motte-and-bailey or ringwork-and-bailey in that there is no sign of a classic circular motte or ringwork and there is no difference in height between the two parts of the mound. This early phase therefore probably took the form of an enclosed manor house rather than a true castle.

The solitary point of access to the castle during its full period of occupation (timber and stone phases) has been in the north-west from the direction of Ravensworth village green. Therefore the remains visible today are almost certainly a reflection of the last phase and overlie the earlier work. They will be described below (see the section on the stone castle). However, the approach to the castle is along a raised causeway which has a two-tiered scarp on its downslope side, giving the impression of having been built up in two stages. These two stages possibly reflect the earthwork and stone phases of the castle, the building of the stone gateway making it necessary to raise the level of the ramp.

The castle mound is encircled by a counterscarp bank, measuring up to 1m high, which produces a shallow moat around the mound, an average of 6m wide. The moat is almost certainly a later feature which is probably contemporary with the stone phase of the castle (see below).

The stone castle

Ryder has produced a detailed report on the upstanding masonry of the castle (1979, 85-97) and it is recommended that this is used alongside the RCHME survey. The large-scale systematic stone robbing described in the Special Commission document of 1608, is indicated on the ground by the uneven nature of the masonry remains and the complex pattern of robber trenches visible today on the castle platform.

The stone phase of the castle built in the 14th century, probably by Henry, Lord Fitzhugh in 1391, together with the expansion of the deer park, seems to have been constructed according to a cohesive design rather than a piecemeal development. What can be seen of the curtain wall is distinctive in its character and links together the towers as one system, and the interior buildings form patterns that suggest an overall plan. The impression that has emerged during the survey is that Ravensworth in the 14th century was a grand fortified house rather than a castle of any defensive capability. The construction of a slight, probably ornamental moat at the same time as construction of the stone phase and the presence of gardens, water features and the extensive deer park indicate the use of Ravensworth as a luxurious country seat.

There is only one piece of evidence which possibly indicates an earlier stone phase, which may have been more defensive in character. A curving line of foundation stones under the north corner of the gate-house (Ryder 1979, 92) mirrors the curve of the castle mound and it is possible that there was an earlier round gate tower. The present gate tower is unusual in that it is forward of the curtain and springs from the base of the moat while the other towers all rise from the top of the mound; it is possible that a pre-existing tower used as a foundation may have occasioned this design.

The 14th-century castle is much degraded due to the stone robbing activities and, apart

from the gate-tower, the standing remains are mostly tall sections of wall seemingly left standing at random when the rest of the masonry was toppled.

When examining the castle earthworks it is important to bear in mind that the robbed out walls are indicated by a negative feature; the trench or platform is the true position of the wall rather than the linear banks created by the robbing activity. The banks are created when a cut is made to loosen and remove the foundation stones, the spoil and loose mortar from which is thrown to one side. This effect is best demonstrated by the long building range occupying the north-east side of the southern mound; here standing walls indicate the true line of the walls which can be traced as a terrace and a linear bank of up-cast spoil which has been thrown to the outside of the building.

A series of very good aerial photographs show the earthwork remains in low light, highlighting the building remains: CUCAP/AQQ/18, CUCAP/BAS/71, NMR 12331/10.

The towers

The outer defence consisted of a series of towers linked together by a curtain wall. It has been suggested (Whitaker 1823, 123-4) that there were eight towers, a tower at each of the four corners of the northern platform and a further four on the southern one. This is defensively sound and symmetrical although there is only standing evidence for three towers, which are the gate tower and the two mural towers on either flank of the southern mound. The turf-covered mound on the north corner of the southern platform has already been discussed as the possible site of a tower in the supposed timber phase; there is no visible stonework nor robber trenches to suggest a robbed out tower here, although it is a very obvious site for a masonry tower. At the east corner of the southern platform there is a raised mound with a short section of walling, from which the facing stones have been robbed leaving the rubble core. It is likely that this is a section of the curtain wall; although there is space for a tower here, there are no conclusive robber trenches.

On the north platform to the south of the gateway, there is a raised section of amorphous grass-covered spoil heaps which form a rough rectangle, measuring 18.0m by 11.5m and standing 1.1m high above the platform surface. This may have been a south gate tower, mirroring the existing one. At the southern corner of the north mound there are also robber trenches, but these seem to indicate a long narrow building occupying the whole of the south-east side, rather than a corner tower. At the east corner there is good evidence for a tower of a similar size and shape to the gate tower. A flat, square platform, measuring 11.5m by 9.0m, stands directly at the corner of the mound in the angle left by two long, robbed out buildings. The platform is delineated by robber trenches which seem to converge with the platform of the robbed-out curtain wall.

The gate tower

A full architectural description is given by Ryder (1979, 88-90). The tower presents the overall impression of a grand, aesthetically pleasing building rather than a utilitarian defensive structure; the striking features are the fine stonework and decorative details. The most obvious of these are the thin, stepped buttresses at each corner. They provide little structural strength and are not uniform in size or shape; they seem designed to embellish the tower, taking away its stark outline. The design of the curtain wall is very

similar, with a chamfered stone top; where this abuts the south-east wall of the tower it has been extended upwards to mirror the buttresses on the other side.

The front of the tower facing directly onto the approach along the raised track presents a severe aspect, the 'defensive' nature of which is enhanced by the presence of three cruciform arrow slits; that these are design features intended to enhance the feeling of strength rather than for defensive use is supported by the fact that the windows in the north-east and south-east faces are decorative and widely-arched, even at ground floor level.

The survival of the gate tower, almost completely intact, is probably due to its use as a dwelling, possibly by the owner, during the demolition process; it would seem odd otherwise that the tower nearest the village remains intact. The tower has not totally escaped robbing, most of the facing stones on the south-west side having been removed, probably the action noted in James Foster's deposition in 1608. Also the foundation of the north-west face has been removed almost along its full length to a depth of 1.3m. This is probably an attempt to topple the wall which was never brought to completion; it gives an interesting insight to the methods employed by the stone robbers.

The south-west tower

A full architectural description is in Ryder (1979, 92). A slender pillar of masonry now survives, standing 10.1m high, which represents part of the north wall and the north-west corner incorporating the junction with the curtain wall which can be seen in section. An unusual feature is the possible gun loop set near ground level facing along the curtain wall; the cramped recess behind it would have made it nearly impossible to use and as a single example it is rather incongruous. Prior to 1914 (OS 1:2500 map) the west face of the tower stood, but it has since collapsed forward into the moat. Large sections are still intact and some architectural details are visible within them. The outline of the remainder of the tower is visible as a well-defined robber trench, 0.7m deep; it was probably of similar dimensions to the gate tower.

The south-east tower

The south-east tower is positioned opposite the south-west tower almost as a mirror image. As indicated by Ryder (1979, 92) the 1787 print by Grose shows the ivy-covered external wall of the tower standing to a considerable height and containing a large arched window. The positioning of an unusually wide window so close to ground level again indicates the placing of aesthetic considerations over those of defence.

All that now remains of the tower is the southern third of the lower part of this external wall, measuring 1.7m wide and standing 3.7m high; the southern internal corner also survives well. The rest of the wall is visible as a rubble foundation; one block of the northern internal corner survives. Large fragments of walling with facing stones intact have tumbled into the moat below the tower; some of these exhibit architectural features from the window. The internal walls of the tower have been robbed away. However, the area is delineated by robber trenches and spoil heaps which roughly outline an area similar in size to the south-west tower. There are two large lumps of mortar-bound rubble core lying close to the external wall.

The relationship between the tower and the curtain wall is unfortunately not preserved; the robber trench of the curtain is visible as it approaches the tower from the north; however, there is no trench on the south side. It is likely that the tower stood forward from the curtain as in the south-west tower.

The curtain wall

The curtain wall is preserved to full height as a stub wall projecting from the south-east face of the gate tower and again at the north face of the surviving fragment of the western tower. It can be seen here to be very thin, measuring 1.1m wide and standing 5.8m high, with a top edge of outward-facing chamfered stones. The top 1.0m of wall is in the form of a parapet to an internal wall walk, measuring 0.4m wide. One other section of the curtain remains standing, on the east corner of the southern mound where there is a 1.9m high piece of rubble core, the facing stones having been robbed away. The remainder of the wall has been comprehensively robbed away but its line is marked by a narrow platform, measuring 1.0m wide which cuts into the edge of the mound to a depth of 1.0m. In places there is a counterscarp on the inside of the mound, standing 0.7m high. Where the wall crosses the dividing ditch its position is marked by a robber trench with spoil banks up-cast on either side, measuring 0.3m high. At the south end of the southern mound the robber trench for the curtain is no longer visible and in its place is a series of amorphous earthworks which interrupt the top edge of the mound. It is possible that there was an internal building here (see below); alternatvely the curtain wall fell inwards and was dismantled where it lay. A large piece of mortared rubble core lies on what could be the projected line of the curtain although it is not possible to tell weather this fragment is *in situ.*

The wall is obviously too slight to withstand a concerted attack. Its low height, relative thinness and unusable wall walk suggest its primary function was decorative and to maintain privacy.

The curtain wall seems to have extended unbroken all the way around the castle mound, even extending across the dividing ditch in such a way as to have the effect of joining the two platforms as one. The wall is also contemporary with the towers, indicated by the joints keyed with the gate and south-west towers. This evidence supports the idea that the 14th-century stone castle was a planned systematic rebuilding.

It is very unusual that the central ditch was not filled in after the curtain wall was built and it is difficult to imagine what useful purpose the ditch would have served inside the castle walls; it would seem to occupy valuable space and even to be something of a hazard. Possibly it was left as a decorative feature, perhaps filled with water as ponds; there is no evidence to support this theory other than the presence of other water garden features outside the castle walls. This ditch may be what Leland was referring to as a 'conduct coming to the hall side' (see above, p. 2).

Internal remains

The internal buildings of the castle have almost totally been robbed away making interpretation of their function almost impossible. However the well-preserved robber

trenches allow for a detailed examination of their form and the use of space within the curtain wall. They have been arranged around four courtyards of different sizes, two on the north and two on the south mound.

The castle is entered through the gateway (Ryder 1979, 92) which still stands as a single arch 3.13m wide; the groove for the portcullis partly survives on the inside face. A scar on the gate tower indicates that the curtain wall would have spanned across the top of the arch. From the gateway a narrow passage leads between the remains of the building or tower on the south-west side and a small 'L'-shaped scarp, probably the remains of a wall, on the other into a forecourt.

This forecourt is bounded on the north-east side by the curtain wall, on the north-west and south-east sides by buildings; to the south-west a causeway leads across the internal ditch to the southern platform. In the eastern corner is a small square depression, measuring roughly 8.0m by 7.0m, surrounded by low banks; it is probably the remains of a small building that was attached to the north-west end of a long building forming one side of the adjacent courtyard.

This courtyard, which measures 27.0m by 23.0m, occupies the remainder of the northern mound, and is entered via a narrow passageway from the forecourt. It is bounded on three sides by buildings and on the south-west side by the central ditch; in the eastern corner is the remains of the possible corner tower described above. The north-east building, represented by robber trenches, is rectangular, measuring approximately 33.0m long by 9.5m wide. A break in the bank slightly offset from the centre of the south-west wall probably marks the position of the doorway. The building does not seem to have abutted the curtain wall, which would have left a narrow passage behind it. The size and shape of this building is comparable with the better preserved example opposite on the southern mound. The two buildings almost mirror one another giving the impression of further enclosing the courtyard although access to the southern building is apparently cut off by the central ditch. The ditch could, of course, have been spanned by a timber bridge.

The north-western side of the courtyard is enclosed by another rectangular building, measuring approximately 29.0m by 10.0m. Two slight stony scarps may be the remains of internal divisions, although they could equally be debris from the stone robbing. The form and position of the building is obvious in plan although the earthworks are very slight on the ground; the building remains are further obscured by a large ash dump which also partially fills the cross ditch. At the intersection of the ditch with the building, the former is narrowed and it may have been partly in-filled to accommodate the building.

The south-eastern side of the courtyard is bounded by the curtain wall, inside which are some amorphous spoil heaps which seem to outline a roughly rectangular area, measuring 23.0m by 8.0m. This is probably the remains of another long building range which, from examination of the robber trenches, was almost certainly connected to the curtain wall.

The interior of the courtyard is mainly flat (if the ash dump is ignored) apart from a low oval mound, measuring 1.6m high in the south corner; this mound does not have the same consistency as the spoil heaps from the stone robbing and is possibly an earlier dump or a

natural mound.

A large courtyard, occupying most of the southern mound, measures 60.0m by 30.0m. It is entered from the forecourt via the causeway over the cross-ditch. The north-eastern side is bounded partly by the remaining section of the ditch and partly by a sizeable rectangular building containing some standing masonry, which measures 29.5m by 6.3m internally within walls of roughly dressed sandstone blocks, measuring 1.13m wide. The west gable wall stands to a height of approximately 5.0m and has two openings, one at ground level, which measures 0.6m wide, which probably represents a window opening since it does not have either a threshold stone nor a lintel, and one above it, probably a second window. Part of the north-east wall and the south corner survives, respectively 1.9m and 1.8m high; the remainder of the building is outlined by robber trenches. There are no indications of any entrances opening into this courtyard to the south.

The south-eastern side comprises an amorphous series of spoil heaps and scarps which outline a roughly rectangular area, measuring about 30.0m by 10.0m; this is probably the remains of a building range. At the north-east end there is a small section of walling, measuring 0.5m long and two courses high; it is not possible to relate this wall to any of the other remains and the robber trenches are too confused to indicate any further details.

The south corner of the courtyard is occupied by the south-east tower (see above). Extending north-west from this is a third rectangular building, measuring 30.0m by 10.0m, outlined by well-preserved but slight robber trenches, measuring no more than 0.2m deep. There is a gap of 5.0m between the presumed rear wall of the tower (outlined by a prominent robber trench) and the gable wall of the building. This gap probably functioned as a way into the fourth and southernmost courtyard, although it is now obscured by spoil heaps from intensive robbing activity. The south-eastern gable wall is visible as a length of mortared rubble core, measuring 5.3m long, with three short sections of internal facing preserved. There are two gaps in the robber trenches that may represent doorways; one at the north-west end of the building facing north, and one in the south-east end facing south.

The castle chapel and belfry tower

The most striking remains within the large courtyard is the slender pillar of masonry which is the remains of a tower, known as the belfry, previously attached to the castle chapel, now completely robbed away. For a detailed architectural description of the chapel and belfry tower remains see Ryder (1979, 95).

The chapel occupied the ground immediately to the north-east of the belfry tower; it is portrayed in a ruinous state in Grose's engraving of 1787 (Ryder 1979, 86). Ryder concludes from the architectural features portrayed in the engraving that the chapel and belfry are of 15th-century construction and probably date from 1467 when the St Giles chantry was founded by the 6th Baron Fitzhugh, nearly a century later than the construction of the rest of the stone castle. It may be that the free-standing chapel was constructed in the courtyard at this time or that there was a rebuilding of an earlier building. A barrel-vaulted building has been attached to the south-west wall of the belfry and is visible as robber trenches.

Very little remains of the chapel itself. The ground to the north is completely flat and devoid of robber trenches; traces of very small scarps to the north-east of the belfry, which may be remains of the chapel, are visible on aerial photographs taken in low winter light in 1967 (CUCAP/AQQ/18). The belfry is complete at ground level, but only the west wall survives to a height of 5.0m. At the base of the third stage of the tower is an inscription which originally encircled the tower; three fallen blocks bearing parts of the inscription lie at its base. According to W Grange, writing in 1855 (quoted by Ryder 1979, 96), the inscription read:

Chr[istu]s d[omi]n[u]s, ih[esu]s, via, fons et origo, alpha et omega.

The centre of the courtyard is flat apart from a short earthwork bank which seems unrelated to the rest of the remains and the function and origin of which is unknown. A gap between the rear wall of the south-west tower and the gable wall of the southern building range leads into the fourth, southernmost courtyard.

The southern courtyard is semicircular in shape, occupying the south-westernmost tip of the south-west platform. The robber trench of the curtain wall, which has a pronounced counterscarp bank measuring 0.7m high at this point, is visible extending from the south-west tower to the tip of the mound. From here around to the south-east tower there are some amorphous earthwork banks and scoops which interrupt the line of the wall and cause a flattening of the curve of the mound. It is assumed that these are a result of stone robbing activity, possibly of a building range; there is a stony ridge in line with an upstanding section of rubble core which may be an *in situ* fragment of the curtain wall or the rear wall of a building. In the base of the moat opposite this feature are two fragments of fallen wall; the south-west one has some facing stones and a fragment of a shaped block which could be the remains of a window or door opening.

The moat

The castle mound is surrounded by a narrow moat which has been constructed by digging a shallow ditch at the base of the mound, the spoil from which has been upcast into an outer counterscarp bank. It is shallow and flat-bottomed and varies in width, measuring from 5.5m to 16m at its widest point opposite the mouth of the cross-ditch; there has undoubtedly been some silting of the moat but it relies on the height of the counter scarp bank for its depth. This bank is best-preserved around the eastern side of the castle, where it measures 1.0m high and 4.5m wide, but in places it is very spread and elsewhere it has been breached. Around the south-west and north-west sides the bank has been completely overwhelmed by the surrounding marsh and it can only be identified as patches of solid ground outlined by areas of differently coloured reeds (indicated by pecked lines on the plans).

On the north side of the castle mound the moat occupies the line of what was presumably the pre-existing ditch of the earlier phase, the base of which was wider and slightly higher than the moat; to maintain the width of the moat and to ensure that it filled with water the moat channel has been cut into the base of the ditch. The cut is visible as a small scarp extending south-westward from the base of the drawbridge abutment on the west side of the castle and also where a triangular wedge of ground forms a double channel on the

north side. The northern channel extends to meet a drain alongside the field boundary and is probably a feeder channel. A slight shadow, visible on an air photograph (NLAP, Meridian 168/71/141), indicates that the channel may have extended further; a spring used to issue near to the corner of the field which may have been diverted down the channel to provide water (personal communication from the present farmer). The channel is also used as an outflow for two ponds which have been dug into the outer lip of the ditch (see below).

The moat is almost certainly a decorative feature; it is too narrow and shallow to have been defensive and is unnecessary given that the castle is surrounded by a marsh which may have been open water. It appears that the moat is a later feature, probably contemporary with the building of the stone phase of the castle *circa* 1391. This is indicated by the way the moat reuses the base of the outer ditch on the north side of the mound and by the way the counterscarp bank ignores the 'waist' between the two mounds, following the straight line of the curtain wall. The purpose of the moat therefore was to provide a strip of standing water outlining the castle, which could be maintained throughout the year, thus providing an approach over water even if the marsh or mere which surrounds it dried out. The presence of decorative water features underlines the importance that the castle builders placed on aesthetic considerations. The moat seems to be part of a wider system of ornamental water features, indicating that the castle sits in a planned landscape.

THE WIDER LANDSCAPE

The Deer Park

A full survey of the deer park was outside the scope of the present work but a brief description is needed to picture the castle in its landscape. The park wall is depicted and annotated on the OS maps from the 1st edition of 1893 onwards.

The deer park occupies an area of about 110 hectares which includes the castle itself; this approximates to the 200 acres (90 hectares) mentioned in the 1391 document. It is enclosed by a large dry-stone wall, constructed of square-cut sandstone blocks, measuring 1.3m wide at the base. It has been incorporated into the modern field pattern and survives reasonably well although at a much reduced height. Parts of it have been destroyed, other sections have been rebuilt, in some cases using the original square-cut blocks. It is unclear whether this wall represents the original boundary of the park or whether it is a later replacement. There is no inner ditch visible but two horizontal scarps parallel to the wall along its northern edge within the castle field may be the remains of an inner bank or an earlier boundary.

From the small pin-fold at Ravensworth village (see below) the park wall follows Stoneygate Bank Road as far as Kirby Hill where it turns west and follows the top of a ridge called Slaters Bank. (Perhaps significantly this ridge, the tower of the parish church at Kirby Hill, and the deer park wall are all visible from the castle.) The wall turns north at Flats Bank and extends in an arc back to the village as far as the south-west corner of the post-war primary school; from here back to the pinfold the last section has been removed. For much of the circuit the deer park wall is coincident with the parish

boundary.

The Outer Earthworks

Many of the earthwork features surveyed by RCHME in the large field containing the castle are both fragmentary and confusing. At the present day, according to the farmer, the marshland around the castle is exceptionally widespread, due in part to imperfect maintenance of the complex drainage system, and as a result of this some of the earthworks disappear into the marsh and are covered by it. Before the castle was built it is probable that this area was boggy and waterlogged and in the early days this may well have provided an effective natural defence for the supposed timber castle. What is unclear is the extent to which the marsh was subsequently drained, when this occurred and for what reason. About 60m-90m to the south-west of the castle mound there is an 'outer moat' which fades into the marsh and is overwhelmed by it. This could have been designed to drain the marsh, perhaps completely, and channel excess surface water into the moat surrounding the mound. The construction of gardens and use of landscaping to enhance the setting of large dwellings, particularly incorporating water features, are ideas which were becoming popular during the 14th and 15th centuries (see, for example, Taylor 1989; Taylor *et al* 1990); a local example is Bolton Castle which had extensive gardens (Stephen Moorhouse, pers comm). Under these circumstances it may have been desirable to drain the bog and in the process provide the opportunity to create a series of ornamental water features which could have included the outer moat. The Enclosure Map of 1778 (NYCRO 1539/475) shows part of the 'outer moat' incorporated into the contemporary field pattern.

The 'outer moat' appears at the edge of the marsh about 90m due south of the castle mound, where it is about 8.0m wide and up to 0.7m deep, and runs westwards then north-westwards for a distance of about 220m as far as the line of the deer park wall, here destroyed. In the middle section it is up to 12.0m wide and 2.0m deep with a slight bank on either side. It then seems to continue for a further 130m approximately running parallel to the park wall and in part occupied by the pond within the marsh and the marsh itself; this length is heavily silted except at the north end next to the school playing field where it survives to a depth of 1.3m.

From a point 80m to the south-west of the castle mound, there is a spur extending from the outer moat towards the castle mound; this disappears within the bog some 20m from the moat around the castle mound. It is somewhat narrower than the 'outer moat', being on average 6.0m wide and up to 0.5m deep. There are the remains of a bridge across the spur at its junction with the 'outer moat'.

Immediately to the south of the 'outer moat', on rising ground adjoining the course of the deer park wall, are the remains of further earthworks. The most obvious section is a 75m long double embanked ditch, up to 0.4m deep and at best 5.0m wide, which may have formed the south arm of a roughly rectangular enclosure, measuring about 58.0m by 18.0m internally. It is possible, however, that the enclosure form is entirely fortuitous. Much of this area has been, and is being, disturbed by rabbits.

The hill-slope to the south of the 'outer moat' contains a number of springs, some of which still run. It is possible that the 'outer moat' was dug to capture this surface water and carry

it away from the environs of the castle.

The dam

A dam (now breached) has been constructed across a valley above the 'outer moat', and some 170m to the south-south-west of it, to contain a sizeable reservoir about 45.0m square with an average depth of 1.6m. The dam survives as a flat-topped earthen mound, 45.0m long by 9.8m wide at the base and 2.0m wide at the top. On the south side it is 1.8m high and to the north 2.6m high. The south face is formed by a stepped stone revetment wall; this once reached the top of the mound but it has been robbed away leaving only the foundation stones and patches of rubble core. The breach is towards its eastern end (possibly at the position of a sluice); this breaching was probably a deliberate act as the foundation stones have been removed to below ground level to ensure drainage.

The line of the dam is continued to the east and north-west by a field boundary; this, or at least most of it, is shown on the 1778 Enclosure Map (NYCRO 1539/475) and the 1841 Tithe Map (NYCRO 1799/159), but the dam itself is not specified nor annotated as such on either document. Where it is well-preserved the field boundary comprises a ditch cut into the hillside up to 1.6m deep (on the upper side) and 0.6m (on the lower), with banks either side up to 0.5m high.

There is a very shallow channel, measuring 0.4m deep, which is visible 40m from the dam and which extends northwards following a sinuous course for 55m before fading out; this could be the remains of an outflow but could equally be a hollow way formed by the passage of livestock through the breach in the dam.

The date and purpose of the reservoir is unknown; possibly it was constructed to provide a steady supply to a mill in the village and had no direct association with the castle.

The marsh and underground drainage

The presence of the marsh in its natural state is due to the underlying geology and topography. However, the level and extent of the water has changed substantially throughout the 20th century due to management, or lack of it, in the form of drainage. In 1997 the level of the marsh is higher than it has been for fifty years due to the channels put in to drain and divert water away from the marsh having become neglected. Most of the water supplying the marsh seeps out of the many springs that emerge from the sloping ground to the south of the castle; one spring (now diverted) used to drain into the moat at the north-east corner of the site. The natural outflow of water from the marsh is probably through underground aquifers. The water flow in and out of the marsh is now controlled by a series of overground leats and underground culverts.

At the time of the supposed earthwork castle, maintaining a high water level in the marsh would have been crucial to the castle's defences; and it is possible that there was active management to divert water into the marsh.

With the building of the stone castle there is a shift in attitude towards a concern for aesthetics. The building of the moat to obtain clear standing water around the castle indicates that the marsh was probably perceived as something of an eyesore; the

management of water levels around the castle for the proper functioning of the moat would have been crucial.

At the time of the 1778 Enclosure Award map (NYCRO 1539/475), and later the Ravensworth Tithe map of 1841 (NYCRO 1799/159 Ravensworth T (PR/KRR)), the marsh had been drained and the fields were referred to as pasture and meadow. Similarly no marsh is shown on the OS 25" 1st edition map of 1839. This situation may have lasted unchanged until the 1940s as aerial photographs show the castle mound surrounded by pasture fields, the only standing water being a small pond in the area of the pond visible today (RAF 106G/UK1170).

In the 18th century the marsh was drained by a stream which flowed from its eastern edge (its origin was probably at the spring at the south-east corner of the site) across the field to the east of the site and through the ridge from where it flowed down to join the Holme Beck (see 1778 Enclosure Award). Where the road crossed the stream the channel must have been at least 2m deep to overcome the rise of the ridge; the road was carried over the stream on a bridge, annotated on OS maps as St Richard's Bridge; this bridge is no longer visible. The stream no longer exists today having been diverted into an underground culvert (probably on the same line) by the time of the 1841 Tithe Map, at this time St Richard's Bridge was probably demolished. It seems that at some time between 1778 and 1841 a complex series of underground culverts was installed to ensure continued draining of the marsh but at the same time enlarging the fields. Subsequent maps show a spring at the point at which the culvert emerges at the surface (NZ 1473 0775). Recently (*c* 1990) a new pipe has been laid across the field to the road, the first 30m of which extends as an open ditch; the spoil heaps at either side of the ditch contain large quantities of flat slabs which are probably the remains of the 18th-century culvert (see aerial photograph NLAP 12353/64).

To feed the new pipe two open drains were dug alongside the eastern field boundary which flow into a sump. Both of these drains follow the line of underground culverts; the upcast spoil contains flat sandstone flags and in places the floor of the ditch is paved by tightly fitting slabs. It seems likely that these are contemporary with the field boundary and are part of the 18th-century system. If the southern drain is followed towards the spring at its origin the modern ditch changes to an open channel formed by an intermittent counterscarp; this is probably an extant section of the original open stream portrayed on the 1778 map. Water from the springs now runs straight into the marsh through a breach in the bank.

The open stream depicted on the 1778 map was probably not a natural water course as there is no trace of the substantial valley that would be produced by a natural stream running through a 2m high ridge. Instead it seems likely that the channel was man-made. If this is the case then it is likely to date from the initial draining of the marsh when the moat was created in the 14th or 15th centuries.

On the west side of the site the marsh seems also to have been drained via an underground culvert, but unlike the east side there is no watercourse shown on the 1778 map. The 1857 6" and the 1896 1:2500 OS maps show a stream extending from springs which flows into

a well, annotated 'Hungeram Well'; this feature still survives as a rectangular space with the remains of an enclosing stone wall around it. On the opposite side of the ridge the water rises to the surface at a spring (NZ 1396 0780); whether there is an underground culvert conveying water through the ridge at this time is unknown. The OS 1:2500 map (1839) shows water emerging from the road side on the opposite side of the ridge; it seems likely that an underground culvert is carrying water from the well to this point. By the time of the 1914 OS 1:2500 map an overground channel leading from the well to the road side had been constructed. This channel exists today as a V-shaped ditch with a counterscarp bank on its east side, separating it from the marsh. Where the ditch has been excavated, close to the field wall, it is 0.9m deep to the top of the counterscarp bank. The ditch carries the spring water at a level 0.4m above the marsh-water; therefore the channel can no longer be used for draining the marsh. In recent years the counterscarp bank has been breached by livestock damage and water is now flowing into the marsh, contributing to the re-formation of the now extensive wetland. The spoil forming the counterscarp bank has many flat sandstone flags, indicating the presence of a pre-existing underground culvert; the culvert survives where it is bridged by a small track and where it crosses underneath the present road, where a track enters the field. It is probable that this culvert was established at the time of the realignment of the field boundaries in the 19th century.

Other underground culverts survive in the area. A substantial stone culvert runs into Hungeram Well, originating from a natural marshy hollow to the west; a hoard of Roman coins was found in the hollow by a metal detectorist (present farmer, pers comm).

Another culvert brings water to Larklands Farm at the south-west corner of the site, where there was a mill. The Larklands Farm complex was built between 1778 and 1841 when it appears on the Ravensworth Tithe map. The mill building itself has been demolished but the millstones lie within the foundations of the structure. The water coming from the culvert has been diverted over the remains of the mill in a drainpipe but this was dry at the time of the present survey.

The original mill race comes to the surface in the bottom of a large natural dry valley to the north-west of Larklands.

Probable Gardens

On gently rising ground immediately to the north of the castle mound but within the confines of the deer park are the remains of at least four adjoining rectilinear features. They have been terraced into the hill-slope, and though the terracing achieves a maximum depth of 0.8m, most of the remains are slight and poorly defined. Despite the incompleteness of these earthworks, they do appear to display a certain neatness and formality and they may be a survival of a garden planned to be viewed from the gate tower. It is possible that the confusing aspect of these features may stem from the fact that what is viewed is an unfinished scheme. An alternative explanation for these earthworks is that at some time after the decline of the castle from a grand residence, and perhaps briefly, this area adjacent to the village within the park was colonised by the spread of village tofts, but these do not look like toft earthworks.

To the south-east of these probable garden earthworks are two extant ponds, one of which has been divided into two, possibly at a later date. They have been dug out of the top lip of the slope which extends from the north edge of the outer castle ditch. Both ponds have been excavated out of sloping ground; in each case the rear of the cut is 1.8m high, and the spoil from the excavation has been used to build up a bank on the down-slope side, which stands 1.3m above the base of the ponds. Each of the ponds drains southwards into a water channel extending from the castle moat; the water supply is more problematic.

The western pond is rectangular, measuring 18.5m long by 4.5m wide. It is subdivided by an earth mound which is lower than the sides of the pond; it may be that this is a later subdivision or possibly it is the slumped remains of the earth core of a timber dam division. There is no ground evidence of a supply channel to the west pond which must have come from somewhere up slope of the pond; an underground pipe may have linked it to the eastern pond. The latter is also rectangular, measuring 17.8m long by 7.1m wide. It may have been supplied by a water channel at its eastern end; the line of this channel is cut by a bowl-shaped depression which forms a sump for the large ditch which runs down the side of the post-1778 field boundary. It is possible that this channel extended to a third pond in the next field, now ploughed out; a shallow depression exists which fills with water in wet weather and a soil mark is visible on some aerial photographs (NLAP 106G/UK1170/5011).

These may have been fishponds but their positioning may well have had an aesthetic function as well as a practical one; they would have been visible from the gate tower and are adjacent to the garden plots.

Field boundaries

The Kirby Ravensworth Enclosure Map of 1778 (NYCRO 1539/475) shows that the deer park was sub-divided into a series of irregular fields. With regard to the large field containing the castle (which defines the area of RCHME survey) it can be seen in some cases that the 18th-century field boundaries follow earlier ditches, notably part of the east castle moat and the 'outer moat'. One of the boundaries to the west of the castle is now occupied by a pond within the marsh and can no longer be seen; this suggests that the marsh was smaller, or absent from the landscape entirely, in 1778.

By the time of the Ravensworth Tithe Map of 1841 (NYCRO 1799/159) the number of enclosures within the large field had reduced to three major areas plus a smaller parcel in the south-west occupied by the dam. The field boundaries exhibit a combination of walling, hedging, and bank and ditch; in some areas they have disappeared completely in the marsh. (One tree, an ash, along an east-west boundary to the south of the castle is 3.6m in circumference.)

The village pound

The village has not been examined in the course of this survey. However, the stone-built village pound has survived at the south-eastern edge of the green by the causeway leading to the castle gatehouse, and is shown on the 1:1000 plan; it is incorporated into the line of the deer park wall. It measures 13.6m north-east to south-west by 6.6m transversely with an entrance 1.7m wide in the north-east from the green. The wall is 0.5m thick and

between 1.7m and 2.0m high; it has been repointed and consolidated with a cement capping to the wall-head, but the interior now contains scrub and is being used as a rubbish dump.

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