

EYE CASTLE.

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The site of Eye Castle has seen so many alterations and changes that little indeed remains of the original structure and fortifications. But, owing to man being *adaptive* and *imitative* rather than *creative*, we can utilise the few features that remain on record, to *materialise* our "Castle in the Air."

A Paper on Eye Castle must perforce begin with the beginning of the Castle, and over the moot point of its origin much ink has been shed, but from this very multiplicity of theories arises confirmation for the belief that Eye Castle is a product of adaptive and progressive evolution.

From the earliest known times Eye possessed certain natural geographical features which constituted a "fortress" in those days, viz., high ground surrounded by water. And here we see Eye Castle in its first stage—A natural stronghold untouched by the hand of man.

Our earliest ancestors, the Icenii of those days, probably improved upon nature by heightening the ground and stockading it, in primitive fashion, as we know that they did throw up earthworks to check the advance of the Roman Legions. But more they did not do. It was contrary to their custom. They were neither by their nature builders nor settlers, but wanderers over the country, with no fixed permanent dwellings, such as our towns, fleeing like the animals to natural cover in case of danger.

The Roman seems to have passed us by, as the situation was evidently not suitable to his tactics.

He cared little for natural helps or hindrances. He threw his roads—straight as a die—over mountain, moor, or morass, regardless of Nature's smiles or frowns. He worked and planned *not* for the *individual*, but for the *Empire*, for national greatness, not personal aggrandisement.

He built his Castles on a scientific system, to enmesh with a cordon of Forts, mutually supporting one another, the whole of the country.

A naturally advantageous position was not sufficient to tempt him to build a Castle here—he was Empire building, not building isolated dominant strongholds.

The fact that many Roman remains are found in the neighbourhood does not build one Roman brick into Eye Castle. It only shows that when we work for our Empire we work for ourselves. The peace and quiet that fled from under the walls of Stephen's Castles was found under the system of the Roman rule, and Roman and Briton lived side by side, and mutually learnt and taught other arts and crafts than those of war.

When the Roman left our land our "fingers had forgotten how to fight," so peacefully had we relied upon our Roman conquerors' courage and resource, that we fell an easy prey to the alien hordes that soon harassed our shores.

Then followed many many years of struggle and strife, resulting in the survival of the fittest, and the formation of the Anglo-Saxon race, and the Anglo-Saxon period.

We find them a people who could and did build; not often in the substantial, solid style of the Roman and Norman stone and brick structures, but using wood and earth for ramparts and walls, and digging moats and dykes.

They were a home loving people with property to protect and circumstances that demanded it. A people to whom "Every man's house is his Castle" applied. And every man according to his means and ability protected his property.

Might was right in those days, and the strongest seized the best. The natural advantages of Eye and its Castle site, improved and added to by many former occupiers, formed a tempting bait to compete for, and it fell into the hands of some strong and influential family, who still further improved and strengthened his property, using as was the custom of the race, the timber, earth and water that was at hand.

That stone was not generally employed in their castle building is evident, as the vassals who built them were bidden to provide only *hatchets* for their work.

Their custom was first to dig a deep trench around the space they wished to enclose, piling up the earth thus removed to form a mound within this trench or fosse, and driving piles to form a stockade along the inner edge of this trench (sometimes both fosse and stockade were double, one within the other).

In the mound that still remains at Eye's Castle we have visible evidence of this Anglo-Saxon work, for *in* the mound we see the fosse—the original trench may be now filled up and obliterated, but in the material of the mound we see the *contents* of the fosse.

One more step and our castle is evolved. And this the Norman Invasion supplied.

The Norman style was an improvement on that of the Anglo-Saxon. They evolved out of the *solid* mound of earth a *hollow* mound of stone and cement. The advantages of the tower over the mound being obvious.

Also the wooden stockade yielded to a stone wall, and of this we may still see the remains.

The Normans did not build a typical Norman Castle here, nor did they build their customary tower, but utilised the old earth mound. And in this lies the great interest of Eye Castle in its gradual and progressive evolution.

When William the Conqueror invaded England, we are told that he found no Castles in England. Yet we know that the Romans built many castles, that Alfred the Great had built some fifty, and that other castles, such as that of Eye, were extant.

Both are true—William looked with a soldier's eye on castles as being *military strongholds*, and the Roman castles had long fallen into ruin; of other castles the stockades of wood had been broken down, the fosses had become filled up, so that to the mind of the *Military Department* there were no castles in England. Exactly as when we Archæologists say there is a castle, we are correct, but if the War Office were to state this in their returns, there would soon be questions asked in the House of Commons, and Headlines in the papers on "*England's obsolete Armament.*" Thus it was that the family of Malet is credited with building Eye Castle, when what he really did was to bring it up to date. William the Conqueror distributed 629 Manors in Suffolk among his followers, giving 221, including Eye, to William Malet, to whom also he granted permission to build a castle there. Many Chroniclers quite overlook the existence of William Malet, and only mention his son, Robert, in connection with Eye, and that is probably because he died before the Domesday survey. William Malet married Hesilia Crispin, came over to England with the Conqueror and fought at Hastings; on the capture of York he was made Sheriff and entrusted with the care of that City in

1068. A year later, on the recapture of the City by the Danes, he was taken prisoner and disappears for a time, but reappears again in the campaign against Hereward the Wake, in which he dies, 1071. His son, Robert, succeeded to his large possessions in Norfolk and Suffolk, and also held property in Yorkshire, and in Henry I.'s reign was Lord Chamberlain of England, but through plotting against his Sovereign and inviting Robert, Duke of Normandy, to invade England, his possessions were confiscated and he himself banished to his Norman estates, where he appears to have been killed at the Battle of Tinchbrai in 1106. The Honor of Eye thus passed into the King's hands, who granted it to his nephew, Stephen, Earl of Boulogne (afterwards King of England), Stephen devised it to his natural son, William, Earl of Boulogne, and in 1156 Henry II. gave it to his Chancellor, Thomas a Beckett. Thomas a Becket retained possession of Eye until his fall in 1162, when it became an escheat of the Crown. We have therefore opportunity of obtaining a little light on the internal economy of Eye Castle, because in the Pipe Rolls which are Crown Exchequer Accounts from 1131, we have the yearly returns of the Sheriff, of the Royal Revenues, and his disbursements for rent of Crown lands Fee farm rents, etc., and what concerns us—Castel ward—Knight's Service usually included Castle ward, and the Honor of Eye was assessed at $90\frac{1}{2}$ Knights' Fees, bound to Castle ward for three months in bands of five. The *repair and upkeep* of the Castle was a Service incumbent upon all. It was one of the three compulsory duties from which few persons were exempted—"Liberi ab omni servitio, exceptis pontis et arcis constructione et expeditione contra hostem." In 1164 (after Beckett's flight to France) Oger, the Sheriff, renders account for the Honor of Eye, including two items touching the Castle, viz., "And in works on the Castle and

bridge of Eia, £32 10s. 7½d., By the King's writ." "And for the custody of the Castle of Eia. To the said Oger, £26 13s. 4d., by the King's writ." During the following five years various sums are spent on "Castle Works," and Oger continues to draw his £26 13s. 4d. for the custody of the Castle.

In 1170 Wimar, the Chaplain accounts for the Honor of Eye, for half a year and Oger only receives £13/6/8 for the Custody of Eye Castle according to these accounts, but under *Orford* there is mention of "To Oger dapifer (Sherif) 10 marks for custody of the Castle of Eya." Orford Manor was another of Robert Malet's Manors, and probably with its Castle, it passed with Eye through the same hands. In the next year there is again mention made of Eye in the Orford Accounts when Oger renders account of £7/6/8 for the sale of Eye Bacon (*de baconibus Eye venditis*). In 1172 Robert Pikenot accounts for ferm of Honor of Eye. In 1173 Bartholomew de Glanvill, Wimar, the Chaplain, and Wm. Bardulf, account for the ferm of Norfolk and Suffolk. For Orford Castle, for work, and 20/- lost "*per rapinam Flandr.*" "Et in Guarnis Castelli de Eya pro 286 sum' frumenti ad predictam mensuram (i.e., the Measure of Ipswich) £30/7/9 by the King's writ, for 195 *bacons* £21, for 626 *cheeses* £9/8/2, for 26 *summ'is fabar'* 41/-, for *ferro* (iron) 48/6, for two great ropes (*caablis*) and other small cords 29/-, for 2 *Pensis Sepi* (? *weight of Sheep's tallow*) 14/-, for lead 15/-, for salt 20/- by the same writ." This Garrisoning of Eye Castle was occasioned by the turbulent times, and in this year (1173) when Henry was at war with his own son, he fortified all his Castles, and his preparations were justified, for on Sept. 29, 1173, the Earl of Leicester landed at Walton in Suffolk with an Army of Flemings. Eye was besieged by them under Earl Hugh (Bigod) the cattle and corn belonging to the garrison were swept away, and the

fish ponds, cow-houses and barns destroyed. Under these circumstances we are not surprised to find that the next year (1174) there are no separate accounts for Eye Honor, as the whole country was laid waste. In 1175 Geoffrey, Bishop of Ely for ferm of Eye Honor for last year and this. Among his expenses are three new Bretescar (stocade)—raising the wall—two bridges, and other work on the Castle. Also £6/7/8 was spent “in providing Stock throughout the Manors of the said Honor, which was lost through the war.” “In repairs of the bays (baiarum viz., divisions) of the vivary (fish-ponds) 40/-. In repair of 3 barns burnt down and 2 cattle sheds 23/10. In minutis negociis eiusdem castre que solebant fieri de Grangiis.” (Little matters connected with the Castle and generally performed by the Granger); 76/9, also for 60 lances, also for waste by war of corn in the demesnes burnt and carried off by Earl Hugh this year and last year, £94/0/6, as is said. For the next seven years, Geoffrey, Bishop, renders his accounts, during which the Honor was gradually recovering from the effects of the war, and from them we learn that the sins of the father were visited upon the children, and Roger Bigot is compelled to pay for the waste that his father had done. He pays £100/100/- blanc and £567/11/4 by tale; is forgiven the rest and pardoned by the King's writ.

In the Ministers' Accounts of 1314–15 we have the Accounts of Gilbert de Ryshton of the proceeds of the Castle and Manor of Eye, and the Hamlets of Dalinghoo, Alderton and Thorndon. The rents of the Honor of Eye, in Suffolk, Norfolk and Essex, and the proceeds of Haughley Manor. When the custodian Roger de Morewood, delivered the premises to Margaret de Gevaston, Countess of Cornwall (this Margaret was sister to Gilbert de Clare, and married Peter de Gavaston, Earl of Cornwall). In 1314–15 there is mention

of £14/13/4 for Castle Guard happening twice this year. Repairs to a room in the gaol blown down by the wind. In clavis pro le Gatehous emptis 6½d. (A key bought for the Gatehouse). Wages to Porter of the Castle and custodian of the Gaol 30/4 at 1d. a day. (In 1138 his name was John de Tokeville). In Henry VII.'s time we have the Accounts of John Nunne, Bailif of Eye, from which we get the names of some of the Lords of the Manors at the time.

From Walter Hubbard, Knt., 10d. for ½ Knight's Fee for Manor of Ruspys. 20d. for Knight's Fee from Benhall Manor. 20d. for K. F. from Humphrey Sakewell. 10d. from John Con's (? Coners) for ½ K. F. 20d. from Thomas Glowshopp for K. F. 20d. from Robert Crane for one K. F. for Bedyngton Manor. In Bailewick of P'ker (Parker) in Eya—Robert Fene, Deputy Bailif. 6/8 from Edw. Brok for Castle Guard for Espall Manor. 20d. from (blank) for land in Fenyngham. 20d. from Robert Garnyshe. 10d. from Ric. Yaxley. 7d. from Walter Hubbard for land in Gyslingham. 20d. for Horpole Manor.

But as all the details would be too tedious, they are in brief:—

The *Duke of Suffolk* paid Castle guard for Horesworth and Huntingfed Manors. *Arthur Hoppton* for Swylington. *Walgrave* for Edwardestone. The *Duke of Norfolk* for Donyngworth. *Duke of Suffolk* for Benhall. *Thomas Fastolf* for Ukynhill. *Wm. Geney* for Dersham. *Thos. Redyngfeld* for a tenement called Flemyngs. *Anth. Rous* for land in Laxfield. *Jn. Wyngfeld, Kt.* *Will. Lyston* and *Ric. Champston* for land in Badingham. *Frac. Calthorpe* for Weybred and Wathersdale. *Arthur Wyngfeld* for Laxfield. *Ric. Fellow* for Westretyng. *John Jerningham* for Horham and Stonam. *Master Huewet* for Stradbroke. *Anth. Wingfield* for Chalysham and Bawdsey. *Simon Brodock* for Hortham. *Ant.*

Wingfield for Dalanghoo. *Magester 'Sekeforth* for Bowlge. *Wm. Naunton* for Alderton. *Robt. Wingfield* for Chattysham. *Edmund Wyndham* for Dilham. *James Arblaster* for Barton and Worsted. *Magr. Paston* for Batton. *Joan Toppysfeld* for Thorneham.

As material for a more complete sketch of Eye Castle, many references might be and are found from indirect sources, e.g.,—

In 1330 John Stillgo was granted for life the custody of Eye Castle and Gaol with the Warrens of Thorndon and Eye lately held by Almaric de Botevill, deceased (from the Patent Rolls we learn that this Boteville on his appointment had also a Fee of 10 Marks out of the issues of the Castle). John Stillgo allowed one of his prisoners, Hugh, son of William le Buk, to escape, but received pardon in 1332. Similar laxity was shown later by a subsequent custodian, Robert Bukton, who allowed John Benteley to escape, but in 1401 he also was pardoned for his negligence. In 1216 Robert, son of Walter Fulcard, was a prisoner in the Castle, but knowing the integrity of this family, as still represented here, we are not surprised to see that he was pardoned—evidently a miscarriage of justice. (I don't say which way!) After the above times the history of the Castle is the history of the Borough—The Castle acted as Gaol, also sharing with the "House called Sippeweia" the functions of Town Hall and Headquarters in general to the Town. It superintended the Pie Powder Court (a summary Court for rough and ready dealing with pedlars, hawkers, etc.—from *Pied Poudreux*, i.e., *dusty foot*, or vagabonds), but gradually the fosse was filled in, the walls removed to give place to other buildings, the arduous ascent up the mound was too laborious for profit or pleasure, and the Castle fell along the lines of least resistance, to its present well earned and dignified repose.

The old enclosure measuring some 130 yards by 70 yards, embraces still the past and the present, the old and the young, for it contains both the Elementary Schools and the Workhouse. And these modern occupiers of the ancient site can find in the dim history of its vanished past, pages both of weal and woe.

To the old—food for retrospection and imagination.

To the young—for emulation and achievement.