



English Fortresses and Castles of the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries

W. H. St. John Hope M.A.

To cite this article: W. H. St. John Hope M.A. (1903) English Fortresses and Castles of the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries, *Archaeological Journal*, 60:1, 72-90, DOI: [10.1080/00665983.1903.10852938](https://doi.org/10.1080/00665983.1903.10852938)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00665983.1903.10852938>



Published online: 16 Jul 2014.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 4



View related articles [↗](#)



Citing articles: 1 View citing articles [↗](#)

ENGLISH FORTRESSES AND CASTLES OF THE TENTH AND ELEVENTH CENTURIES.

By W. H. ST. JOHN HOPE, M.A.¹

The antiquarian world has recently been startled by the calling in question of the accepted views on certain types of post-Roman earthworks found in this country, especially with regard to the class known as "burhs," as laid down by the late Mr. G. T. Clark, and eventually followed without hesitation by the late Professor Freeman and most other writers on the subject.²

The present seems therefore a fitting opportunity to lay before the Royal Archaeological Institute some remarks on the extent of our knowledge of the subject. There are also two other reasons for so doing. Firstly, because four important fortresses, the castles of Southampton, Winchester, Portchester, and Carisbrooke, are to be visited during the present Meeting; and, secondly, because special attention has been given to the study of earthworks and castles by the Institute from its earliest days, and many of the best papers on the subject are printed in the *Archaeological Journal*.

The principal writer of these communications was the late Mr. G. T. Clark. He contributed a paper on "Military Architecture" to the first number of the *Journal* in 1844, and though his next, an account of Corfe Castle, did not appear until 1865, from that time down to 1889 there is hardly a volume that does not contain one or more of his lucid contributions. In 1884, Mr. Clark published in two volumes, entitled *Mediaeval*

¹ Read at the Southampton Meeting of the Institute, July, 1902.

² Mr. Clark's theories were first called in question by the writer of a retrospective review of his work on *Mediaeval Military Architecture in England* in *The Quarterly Review* for July, 1894 (No. 357, pp. 27-57), of which Mr. J. H. Round has since acknowledged the authorship. The matter was further

discussed by Mr. George Neilson in an article on "The Motes in Norman Scotland" in *The Scottish Review* for October, 1898 (pp. 209-238), and in a paper on "Anglo-Saxon Burhs and Early Norman Castles" by Mrs. F. S. Armitage in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland*, Session 1899-1900, vol. xxxiv, pp. 260-288.

Military Architecture in England, a collection of his papers, many of which had been printed elsewhere than in the *Journal*. This collection, unfortunately, was not revised by the author before publication, with the result that a work which must for some time, at any rate, serve as the standard authority on English Castles, is marred by contradictions and blemishes that might have been eliminated. The most serious of these blemishes is the section which deals with the question of burhs.

Almost the last of Mr. Clark's long series of contributions to the *Archaeological Journal* was a paper entitled "Contributions towards a complete list of moated mounds or burhs." This was printed in the number for September 1889, five years after the issue of his volumes of collected papers, and may therefore be taken to represent his final views on the subject.

Concerning these earthworks, Mr. Clark writes : " Their chief and most striking characteristic is a circular mound, table topped, and surrounded by a deep and broad ditch, out of which, where the mound is wholly artificial, it has been formed. Appended to the mound, outside of, or beyond its ditch are one or two enclosures, abutting upon the ditch of the mound, and contained within banks of earth, defended by an extensive ditch, communicating with the ditch of the mound. . . . An earthwork of this description is what is described in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle as a Burh, and when we read that Edward or Ethelflede wrought or Getymbred a Burh,¹ this is what we may expect to find, unless the works have been levelled or encroached upon, as is often the case."²

Mr. Clark's definition of a burh is so widely held, now that it has been put into print, that it will be interesting to see what is the evidence for it in the Chronicle.

In recording events subsequent to the first landing of the Danes in England in 787, the Chronicle mentions three classes of fortress :

¹ Mr. Clark and those who follow him have overlooked the existence of dozens of other moated mounds outside Mercia and East Anglia, which could

not in anywise have been thrown up by Edward or Ethelflede.

² *Archaeological Journal*, xlvi, 197, 198.

- (1) the "geweorcs" and fastnesses thrown up for the most part by the Danish invaders or "heathen men" during the second half of the ninth century;
- (2) the "burhs" or "burgs" builded or wrought by the English during the first quarter of the tenth century as offensive and defensive works against the Danes; and
- (3) a new form of fortress, introduced by the Normans, called "castel."

The term "geweorc" is usually applied to the defensive works or fortresses thrown up by the Danish invaders for the protection of themselves, their women, and children, as well as their horses, and the cattle they had raided for food, when they felt themselves strong enough to winter here. The first time they ventured to do this, in 851, they chose an island on the coast, that of Thanet, with the sea behind to retreat by, and in 855 the island of Sheppey, which had the same advantage.

The first mention of a "geweorc" is in 868, when the Danish army took up its winter quarters within one at Nottingham.¹ Neither the site nor the nature of this fortress is known, but it was strong enough to sustain a siege by the Mercians and West Saxons, which ended in their making peace with the invaders. Other "geweorcs" were wrought by the Danes at Middleton and at Appledore in Kent in 893,² and at Benfleet in Essex³ and at Shoebury in 894.⁴

¹ 868. Her for se ilea here innan Mierce to Snotengaham, & þær winter setl namon; & Burgræd Miercna cyning & his wiotan bædon Æpered West Seaxna cyning & Ælfréd his broþur þæt hie him gefultumadon, þæt hie wiþ þone here gefuhton; & þa ferdon hie mid Wesseaxna fierde innan Mierce of Snotenga ham, & þone here þær metton on þam geweorce, & þær nan hefelic gefeoht ne wearþ, & Mierce friþ namon wiþ þone here. Plummer and Earle. *Two of the Saxon Chronicles parallel* (Oxford, 1892 and 1899), i. 68, 70. In future notes this edition will be quoted as "Plummer and Earle."

² 893. . . þa sona after þam com Hæsten mid lxxx. scipa up on Temese muðan, & worhte him geweorc at Mid-

deltune, & se oþer here at Apuldre. *Ibid.* i. 84.

³ 894. Hæfde Hæsten ær ge worht þæt geweorc at Beamfleote. *Ibid.* i. 86. Þa he þa wið þone here þær wast abisgod wæs, & þa hergas wæron þa gegaderode begen to Sceo byrig on East Seaxum, & þær geweorc worhtun. *Ibid.* i. 87.

⁴ One other early fortress is mentioned in the Chronicle, that at Wareham, in Dorset, to which the Danish army stole away in 876. Wareham had been a place of note for some time before, and Beorhtric king of Wessex is recorded to have been buried there in 784. The town stands to-day within an extensive rectangular earthwork of early date, which protects it on three sides, while

But the word was not restricted to Danish defences only. In 878 King Alfred was compelled to take refuge from the Danes, with a small band of followers, among the woods and moor fastnesses of Somerset, and here in the spring he wrought a "geweorc" or fort at Athelney, and from it made sallies to harry the enemy.¹ In 896 the Danes wrought a "geweorc" on the Lea, twenty miles north of London, from whence they harried the neighbourhood. But the king wrought two "geweorcs," one on either side of the river, below their "geweorc," and so hindered the Danes from bringing out their ships. They accordingly went overland to Quatbridge by the Severn and there wrought themselves another "geweorc," in which they wintered.²

In 885 one part of the Danish army went to Rochester, and there besieged the "ceaster," then, as still, encircled by its Roman wall. They also wrought a "faestan" or fastness about themselves, probably to guard against surprise. The city was defended until Alfred came without with his army, and compelled the Danes to raise the siege, whereupon they "forlet that geweorc" as it is also called, and withdrew to their ships, leaving their horses behind them.³ It has been supposed by

the river Frome forms the defence on the fourth side. The high banks enclose an area of about 80 acres, and are locally known as "the walls"; there are however no signs of masonry on them. The remnant of a small mount by the river in the south-west corner may belong to a later period. Both Mr. Fox and Mr. Haverfield tell me there is no reason whatever for regarding Wareham as a Roman site, and as the defences moreover possess a cardinal defect never found in Roman work, the absence of a rampart or wall on the fourth side, they may be of Saxon or Danish origin.

¹ 878. On Eastron worhte Ælfred cýning lytle werede geweorc at Æpelinga eige, & of þam geweorce was winnende wip þone here, & Sumursætna se dæl se þar nieht was. Plummer and Earle, i. 76.

- 896. On þy ylcan gere worhte se fore sprecena here geweorc be Lygan xx. mila bufan Lundén byrig. Þa þæs on sumera foron micel dæl þara burg wara, & eac swa opres folces, þæt hie gedydon æt þara Deniscana geweorce, & þær wurdon gefliemde, & sune scower

cýninges þegnas ofslægene. Þa þæs on hærfæste þa wicode se cýng on neaweste þære byrig, þa hwile þe hie hira corn gerypon, þæt þa Deniscan him ne mehton þæs ripes for wiernan. Þa sume dæge rad se cýng up be þære eæ, & gehawade hwær mon mehte þa ea for wyrcean, þæt hie ne melton þa scipu ut brengan. & hie ða swa dydon. worhton ða tú geweorc. on twa healfe þære eas. Þa hie ða þæt geweorc furpum ongunnen hæfdon, & þær to ge wicod hældon. þa onget se here þæt hie ne mehton þa scypu utbrengan; þa forleton hie hie, & eodon ofer land þæt hie gedydon æt Cwat brycege be Sæfern, & þær gewerc worhton. *Ibid.* i. 89.

³ 885. Her to dælde se fore sprecena here on tu, ofer dæl east. ofer dæl to Hrofes ceastre; & ymb sæton ða ceastre, & worhton ofer fæsten ymb hie selfe. & hie þeah þa ceastre aweredon oppæt Ælfred com utan mid fierde; þa eode se here to hiera scipum, & forlet þæt geweorc. & hie wurdon þær behorsude, & sona þv ilcan sumere ofer sæ gewiton. *Ibid.* i. 78.

some that the Danish fastness was the large mount to the south of the present castle, known as Boley Hill, but there are difficulties against accepting this view, and the mount is much more likely to be a work of Norman times.

In 893 the Danes with 250 ships landed from Boulogne at the mouth of the river Limen. They towed their vessels four miles up the stream as far as the weald, and there stormed a "geweorc," which is described as a fastness only half-wrought, containing but a few countrymen.¹ This fastness seems to have been the Roman fort at Lympe, then probably already partly destroyed by the landslips that have since brought about its present utter ruin. The mention of its being but "half-wrought" suggests that it was undergoing repair when attacked by the Danes.

There remains the question, what was the nature of the "geweorcs" and fastnesses we have been considering?

Mr. Clark includes them among his burhs, and asserts that "some of these works remain, and are good examples of moated mounds." Unfortunately he quotes one instance only, that at Farnham, and this is not described in the Chronicle as a "geweorc," but only as the site of a battle.³ So far as I have been able to ascertain, not only is a moated mount conspicuous by its absence at every place where a "geweorc" or fastness is said to have been wrought, but the traces of the works themselves are so indefinite that in many cases their very sites are still in dispute. Apparently these works were nothing more than entrenched or palisaded enclosures for temporary defence, like the zareba of modern warfare, and their disappearance is therefore easy to account for.

We must next consider the question of the burhs or burgs, for they are called by both names.

¹ 893. Her on þysum geare for se micla here . . . comon up on Limene muþan. mid eel. hunde scipa . . . on þa ea hi tugon up hiora scipu oþ þone weald .iiii. mila fram þam muþan ute weardum. & þær abracon an geweorc. inne on þam fæstenne sæton feawa

cirlisce men on, & wæs sam worht. *Ibid.* i. 84.

² *Op. cit.* i. 20.

³ 894. þa for rad sio fierd hie foran, & him wið gefeahrt æt Fearnhamme, & þone here gefiende, and þa here hypa ahreddon. Plummer and Earle, i. 85.

The word "burh" first occurs in the Chronicle, so far as the present question is concerned, in 886, with reference to London :

"Ðy ilcan geare gesette Ælfred cyning Lunden burh . . . & he þa befeste þa burh Æþereðe ealdormen to healðenne";¹

or in more modern English :

"In the same year King Alfred restored London, and he then committed the burh to the keeping of alderman Æthered."

Burhs are also mentioned incidentally in the account of Alfred's campaign against the Danes in 894, but that at Exeter is the only one named.²

During the harrying of the Danes by King Edward the elder and his sister Ethelfleda, burhs were builded or wrought in many places in Mercia and East Anglia between 910 and 925.

Those credited to Ethelfleda are "Bremesburh" (909),³ "Scergeate" and Bridgnorth (912),⁴ Tamworth and Stafford (913),⁵ Eddesbury and Warwick (914),⁶ and "Cyrigbyrig," "Weardbyrig," and Runcorn in 915.⁷ In 917 Ethelfleda acquired the burh called Derby, but not without the loss of four of her thanes, who were slain within the gates (binnan tham gatum),⁸ and the following year the burh at Leicester (Legraceastra) submitted peaceably to her.⁹ Ethelfleda died at Tamworth in 918 and was buried at Gloucester.

The accounts of King Edward's burh-building are of great interest.

In 913 he ordered the north burh to be built at Hertford between the three rivers Maran, Bean, and

¹ *Ibid.* i. 81.

² *Ibid.* i. 86.

³ 909. þy ilcan geare Æþelflæd getimbrode Bremes burh. *Ibid.* i. 95.

⁴ 912. Her com Æþelflæd Myrena hlæfdige . . . to Scergeate, & þær ða burh getimbrede. & þæs ilcan geares þa æt Brige. *Ibid.* i. 96.

⁵ 913. Her Gode forgyfendum for Æþelflæd Myrena hlæfdige mid eallum Myrcum to Tamaweorðige. & þa burh þær getimbrede. on foreweardne sumor, & þæs foran to hlaf mæssan. þa æt Stæf forða. *Ibid.* i. 96.

⁶ 914. þa ðæs oþre geare þa æt Eades byrig on fore weardne sumor. & þæs ilcan geres eft on ufewardne hærfest þa æt Wæringwicum. *Ibid.* i. 98

⁷ 915. þa ðæs oþre geare on ufan midre winter þa æt Cyric byrig & þa æt Weard byrig. & ðy ilcan gere foran to middan wiutra þa æt Rum cofan. *Ibid.* i. 99.

⁸ 917. Her Æþelflæd Myrena hlæfdige Gode fultum gendum foran to hlæf mæssan begeat þa burh mid eallum þam ðe þær to hyrde, þe ys haten Deoraby. þær wæron eac of slegene hyre þegna feower ðe hire be sorge wæron binnan þam gatum. *Ibid.* i. 101.

⁹ 918. Her heo begeat on hire geweald mid Godes fultume on fore weardne gear gesybsumlice þa burh æt Ligraceastre. *Ibid.* i. 105.

Lea. The next summer he encamped at Maldon while the burh at Witham was being wrought and builded by some of his force, while others wrought a burh at Hertford on the south side of the Lea.¹ In 918 the king went to Buckingham and sat there four weeks, and wrought two burhs (*burga* or *byrig*), one on each side of the river, before he left.² In 919 he went to Bedford and gained the burg there. Here too he stayed four weeks, and wrought the burg on the south side of the river before he went thence.³ The next year the king was again at Maldon, where he also builded and established a burg.⁴

In 921 King Edward was very busy. First he went to Towcester, and there builded the burg, and a few weeks later he ordered the burg at "Wigingamere" to be built. In the course of the summer the Danes besieged Towcester unsuccessfully for a whole day. Another band also went to Tempsford and wrought a "geweorc" there, at the same time abandoning one at Huntingdon which they had previously occupied.⁵ They also laid siege unsuccessfully to Bedford and the burgh at "Wigingamere." The Danes themselves were next besieged in turn in their burg, as it is also called, at Tempsford, which was stormed.

¹ 913. Her on þys geara . . . het Eadweard cyning atimbran þa norðran burg æt Heorot forða be tweox Memeran & Bene fican & Lygean; & þa æfter þam þæs on sumera . . . þa fór Eadweard cyning mid sumum his fultume on East Seaxe to Mældune & wicode þær þa hwile þe man þa burg worhte & getimbrede æt Witham & him beag god dæl þæs folces to þe ær under Deniscra manne anwalde wæron, & sum his fultum worhte þa burg þa hwile æt Heorotforða on sup healfe Lygean. *Ibid.* i. 96.

² 918. & þa æfter þam on þam ilcan geare foran to Martines mæssan, ða for Eadweard cyning to Bucingahamme mid his fyrde, & sæt þær feower wucan, & geworhte þa byrig buta on ægþær healfe eas ær he þanon fore. *Ibid.* i. 100.

³ 919. Her on þys gere Eadweard cyng for mid fierde to Bedan forða foran to Martines mæssan, & be get þa burg, & him cirdon to mæst ealle þa burgware þe hie ær budon, & he sæt þær feower wucan, & het atimbran

þa burg on sup healfe þære eas ær he þonan fore. *Ibid.* i. 100.

⁴ 920. Her on þys gere foran to middum sumera for Eadweard cyning to Mældune, & getimbrede þa burg & gestaðolode ær he þonan fore. *Ibid.* i. 100.

⁵ 921. Here on þysum gere foran to Eastron Eadweard cyning het gefaran þa burg æt Tofeccastre. & hie getimbran; & þa eft æfter þam on þam ilcan geare to gang dagum he het atimbran þa burg æt Wiginga mere;

þy ilcan sumera be twix hlaf mæssan & middum sumera se here bræc þone friþ of Hamtune, & of Ligera ceastre, & þonan norþan, & foron to Tofe ceastre, & fuhton on þa burg ealne dæg, & þohton þæt hie hie sceolden abrecan; ac hie þeah awerede þæt folc þe þær binnan wæs oþ him mara fultum to com, & hie forleton þa þa burg, & foron aweg;

þy ilcan siþe for se here of Huntandune, & of East Englum, & worhton þæt geweorc æt Tæmese forða, & hit budon & bytledon, & forleton þæt oþer æt Huntandune . . . *Ibid.* i. 101.

A little later the English beset the burg at Colchester, and fought against it until they reduced it, and slew all the folk therein "except the men who fled over the wall (weall)."¹ The same autumn the King went to Passenham and sat there the while his men wrought the burg at Towcester with a stone wall (stan weall).² He also repaired the burgs at Huntingdon and Colchester, and built that at "Cledemutha," a place as yet unidentified.³

In 922 Edward went to Stamford and wrought the burg on the south side of the river, and the folk in the north burg submitted to him. After Ethelfleda's death at Tamworth, he took possession of the burg there, and afterwards went to Nottingham, where he first reduced the burh and then ordered it to be repaired and peopled.⁴ In 923 Edward went to Thelwall, and there ordered the burg to be built, inhabited, and manned.⁵ The following year he was again at Nottingham, where he wrought a burg on the south side of the river, opposite the other, and the bridge over the Trent between the two burgs. From thence he went into Peakland to Bakewell, and there ordered a burg to be built and manned in the immediate neighbourhood.⁶ In 925 King Edward died.

We ought now to consider why these burhs were

¹ Þa æfter þam þæs for hræpe gegad-orode micel folc hit on hærfest, ægþer ge of Cent, ge of Suprigum, ge of East Seaxum, ge æghwonan of þam nihstum burgum, & foron to Colne ceastre, & ymbsæton þa burg, & þær on fuhton of hie þa geeodon, & hæst folc eall of slogon, & genamon eal þæt þær binnan wæs, buton þam mannum þe þær of fugon ofer þone weall. *Ibid.* i. 102.

² Þa þæs for hræpe þæs ilcan hærfestes for Eadweard cyning mid West Sexna fierde to Passan hamme, & sæt þær þa hwile þe mon worhte þa burg æt Tofe ceastre mid stan wealle. *Ibid.* i. 102.

³ 921. Her Eadweard cing getimbrede þa burh æt Clede muþan. *Ibid.* i. 105.

⁴ 922. Her on ðysum gere betweox gangdagum & middan sumera for Eadweard cyng mid fierde to Stean forde, & het gewyrcean ða burg on suð healfe ðære eas, & sæt folc eal ðe to ðære norþerran byrig hierde. him beah to, &

sohtan hiue him to hlaforde. & þa on þam setle ðe he þær sæt, þa gefor Æþelfled his swystar æt Tame woþthige. xii. nihtum ær middum sumera; & þa gerad he þa burg æt Tameworthige. . . . Þa for he þonan to Snotingaham & gefor þa burg, & het hie gebetan & gesettan. ægþer ge mid Englisum mannum, ge mid Deniscum. *Ibid.* i. 103, 104.

⁵ 923. Her on þysum gere for Eadweard cyning mid fierde on ufan hærfest to Þel wæle, & het gewyrcean þa burg, & gesettan, & gemannian. *Ibid.* i. 104.

⁶ 924. Her on þysum gere foran to middum sumera for Eadweard cyning mid fierde to Snotingaham, & het gewyrcean þa burg on sup healfe þære eas, ongean þa opre, & þa byrce ofer Treontan betwix þam twam burgum; & for þa þonan on Peac lond to Badecan wiellon, & het gewyrcean ane burg þær on neaweste, & gemannian. *Ibid.* i. 104.

wrought and for what reason their sites were chosen, but before so doing it is necessary to clear the ground by regarding them from the standpoint of Mr. Clark.

Of Ethelfleda's burhs, "Bremesburh," "Scergeate," "Cyrigbyrig," and "Weardbyrig," and of Edward's, "Wigingamere" and "Cledemutha" have not yet been identified. At seven, Bridgnorth, Stafford, Eddesbury, Runcorn, Witham, Maldon, and Thelwall there is no record or trace of any moated mount. There are mounts at Tamworth, Warwick, and Leicester, each of them the site of a Norman castle, but there is none at Derby. At Bakewell there is a small oblong enclosure to the west of the town, with a small mount near one end, which has been thought to be Edward's burg, but it does not conform to Mr. Clark's theory.

In the case of the double burhs at Hertford, Buckingham, Bedford, Stamford, and Nottingham, there ought, according to Mr. Clark, to be two mounts at each of these five places. Of Hertford he writes: "One is gone, but the other remains, and on it was the shell keep of the castle of de Valognes;" and of Buckingham: "The two moated mounds thrown up in 918 are gone, and the present church stands on the site of one of them. The other was probably occupied by the keep of Earl Gifford's castle." Of Bedford he writes: "One of the two mounds mentioned in the Saxon Chronicle has been lowered and surrounded by earth-banks, and the subsequent masonry removed. . . . The second mound on the right bank of the Ouse has long been removed." Of the two burhs at Stamford, Mr. Clark writes: "One was connected with the later castle, now swept away;" and of those at Nottingham he has also to admit, "Both are now gone."

So that out of ten possible mounts, two have been preserved as the sites of Norman castles, and eight, Mr. Clark thinks, have been removed.

For myself I am extremely sceptical as to this theory of such wholesale removal. As every antiquary knows, earthworks are the most persistent of landmarks, and those are the more enduring that include a mount, owing to the great cost and labour which its removal would involve.

The fact is that Mr. Clark's theory of a burh had no existence outside his own imagination, and we need not waste time in looking for mounts where never mount was. The Chronicle, to which Mr. Clark appeals, does not give the slightest hint that any mount was anywhere thrown up, but it contains abundant evidence of what a burh really was. The "Lundenburh" restored by Alfred was no moated mount, but, as is well known, the Roman city of London, the walls of which were repaired by the king in 886. So too the burg at Colchester, which was beset and stormed by the English in 921, was the Roman town of *Camulodunum*, and we are told that the Danes within who escaped slaughter, were they who fled away over the (Roman) wall. It is clear too that many of the burhs captured by or surrendered to Edward and Ethelfleda were fortified towns also. Some were probably defended only by entrenchments or palisades, while others, such as Chester, which was renovated in 907, and Leicester, were walled, and Derby had its gates.

There is moreover an interesting entry in one of the copies of the Chronicle which shows clearly the meaning of the word, that Kenulf, who was abbot of Peterborough from 993 to 1006, "first made the walls about that monastery, and then gave it for name Burch that was before called Medehamstede."¹

A burh or burgh was therefore something more than a mere fort, such as a mount and court formed, and the *New English Dictionary*, s.v. Borough, properly defines it as "a fortified town; a town possessing municipal organization; more generally, any inhabited place larger than a village."

We may now return to the question why burhs were wrought, and for what reason their sites were chosen.

The object of their construction by Edward and Ethelfleda was clearly to keep out the Danes, or to enclose them, as it were, with a series of blockhouses, by barring the waterways which the enemy used. Edward possessed a number of important towns, such as London, Oxford, Gloucester, Hereford, and Chester, already built

¹ He macode fyrst þa wealle abutan Burch. þe ær het Medeshamstede. þone mynstre. geaf hit þa to nama *Ibid.* i. 117.

beside rivers, the passage of which they commanded. Other burhs that fell into his hands, including Derby, Leicester, Tamworth, York, Bedford, Huntingdon, and Stamford, were similarly situated. Some of these, like Bedford and Stamford, were made stronger by being extended to both sides of the river, and at other places entirely new works were necessary, as at Bridgnorth, Stafford, Warwick, Thelwall, and Maldon, which again were doubled at important points like Buckingham, Hertford, and Nottingham.

A reference to a map shows very clearly the importance of the sites chosen for Edward's and Ethelfleda's burhs, and how effectually they and the pre-existing towns defended the passage of all the chief rivers in Edward's dominions. The Romano-British forts of the Saxon shore had played a similar part in defending all the great estuaries from the Wash to the Solent, but Edward had to contend with an enemy already in being, and his strongholds had therefore to bar the waterways inland, so that the enemy within the cordon could be reduced to submission, and any without hindered from coming further.

The consequences of Edward's policy soon became visible. The building of Witham caused the submission of many who were before under the power of the Danes. The surrender of Leicester to Ethelfleda was followed by the submission of York. The walling of Towcester induced the Danish army at Northampton to own Edward as lord. The repair of Huntingdon, Colchester, and Nottingham, and the capture of Bedford and Stamford, also brought about further surrenders, so that in 922 all the people who were settled in the Mercians' land submitted to Edward, both Danish and English,¹ and in 924 he was chosen for father and lord by the Scots, and all the Northumbrians, and by all the Strathclyde Welsh.²

¹ Him cierde eall þæt folc to þe on Merca lande geseten was, ægþer ge Denisc ge Englisce. *Ibid.* i. 104.

² Hine geceas þa to fæder & to hlaforde Scotta cyning & eall Scotta þeod; & Rægnald, and Eadulfes suna, &

ealle þa þe on Norþ hymbrum bugeaþ, ægþer ge Englisce, ge Denisce, ge Norþmen, ge opre; & eac Stræcled Weala cyning, & ealle Stræcled Wealas. *Ibid.* i. 104.

We have lastly to consider the third class of the fortresses referred to in the Chronicle, the "castels" of the Norman period.

The first mention of a "castel" is in 1048 :

"Then had the Welshmen wrought a castle in Herefordshire among Earl Swegen's followers and wrought every harm and insult to the king's men thereabout that they could";¹

and the surrender of this castle and of the Frenchmen, *i.e.* Normans, who were in it was among the things demanded by Earl Godwin in 1052.

On the return of Godwin from banishment in 1052, the Chronicle states that Archbishop Robert and the Frenchmen, who had caused the discord between Godwin and the King, "took their horses and went, some west to Pentecost's castle, some north to Robert's castle."²

The castle in the west has been identified by Mr. Round as the castle of Osbern surnamed Pentecost, at Ewias Harold,³ and is probably the Herefordshire castle referred to in 1048. The castle to the north, that is of London, was apparently, as Mr. Round also suggests,⁴ the castle of Robert son of Wimar, at Clavering in Essex.

We are on more sure ground in the case of the next example, the "castel at Hæstinga port," wrought by Duke William of Normandy on his landing in England in 1066, for the Bayeux Tapestry actually depicts its throwing up, as is shown by the inscription: "ISTE : IVSSIT : VT : FODERETVR : CASTELLUM : AT : HESTENGA-CEASTRA."

Early in the following year, William, now King of the English, went over sea to Normandy; "and Bishop Odo and Earl William," says the Chronicle, "remained here behind, and wrought castles widely throughout the nation and oppressed poor folk; and ever after that it greatly grew in evil."⁵

¹ Ʒa hæfdon Ʒa welisce menn ge wroht ænne castel on Herefordscire on Swegenes eorles folgoðe. & wrohten ælc Ʒæra harme. & bismere Ʒæs cynges mannan Ʒær abutan Ʒe hi mihton. *Ibid.* i. 173, 174.

² Ʒa ge axode Rotberd arch & Ʒa Frencisce menn Ʒgenamon heora hors. & gewendon sume west to Pentecostes

castele. sume norð to Rodbertes castele. *Ibid.* i. 181.

³ J. H. Round, *Feudal England*, 324; *Archæologia*, lviii. 323.

⁴ *Archæologia*, lviii. 328.

⁵ Oda ð & Wyllelm eorl be lifen her æfter. & worhton castelas wide geond Ʒæs peode. & earm folc swencte. & a svððan hit yflade swiðe." Plummer and Earle, i. 200.

Now what were these castles, why and by whom were they raised, and in what did they differ from the fortresses we have already dealt with?

In the Chronicle a "castel" is an offensive and defensive work distinct from a town, though there are some Anglo-Saxon charters in which it clearly means a fortified town. Thus a charter of Egbert of 765 refers to land "intra castelli moenia supranominati, id est Hrofescestri,"¹ and one of Ethelwulf of 855 mentions "unam villam . . . in meridie castelli Hrobi." In both cases the reference is to Rochester, where no castle, in the later sense of the word, existed until one was wrought by Odo bishop of Bayeux about 1080. The mention too in Domesday Book of the "Castrum Harundel" in the time of King Edward has been lately shown by Mr. J. H. Round to refer to the town of Arundel, and not to Earl Roger's stronghold,³ and this is also the case with "Castellum Monemude."

But the usual meaning of "castle" is a fortified enclosure (Lat. *castrum* or *castellum*), surrounded by walls or earthworks. It was also the stronghold of an individual, and not of a community, and had therefore nothing in common with a burh, burg, borough, or town.

By the time of the Norman Conquest many of the burgs to which reference has been made had risen in importance and become populous centres, partly perhaps on account of their situation on a waterway, and also from their position on main lines of road. But their inhabitants, whether English or Danish, were alike hostile to King William. It was therefore part of William's policy to build a castle at every such centre, for the double purpose of keeping the unfriendly townfolk in order, and guarding and controlling the river passage.

And it is quite clear that these castles were something new. I have already quoted the complaint of the chronicler that William's regents, Odo bishop of Bayeux and William FitzOsbern the earl, during the king's absence in Normandy in 1067, "wrought castles widely throughout the nation and oppressed poor folk."

¹ Thorpe, *Registrum Roffense*, 16.

² *Ibid.* 24.

³ *Archaeologia*, lviii. 332.

Orderic, too, in describing the insurrection that took place in 1068 in various parts of the kingdom, especially in the Welsh marches and in Northumbria, says that "the fortresses which the French call castles have been very few in the English provinces, and on this account the English, although they were warlike and bold, were notwithstanding too feeble to resist their foes."¹

The few castles that already existed, like Pentecost's castle and Robert's castle mentioned in the Chronicle, were most probably the work of Norman favourites of King Edward.

William of Jumièges also states that King William, "guided by the prudence which he knew how to be mindful of in everything pertaining to a king, visited with extreme care the least fortified parts of his kingdom, and to repulse the attacks of enemies established very strong castles in suitable positions, which he fortified with the best of his soldiers and plenty of pay."²

These statements by Orderic and William of Jumièges are confirmed by Domesday Book, which describes quite a number of castles in terms that show they were new.

Concerning castles that were in the hands of the King, we read therein of houses being destroyed "pro castello" at Wallingford, of twenty-seven houses destroyed "pro castro" at Cambridge, and sixteen at Gloucester "ubi sedet castellum." At Huntingdon there used to be twenty houses "in loco castris" and "ubi castrum est." At Lincoln one hundred and sixty-six houses were destroyed "propter castellum." At Stamford five dwellings had become waste "propter opus castelli," and four at Warwick "propter situm castelli."

In the manor of Kingston, co. Dorset, the King had a hide of land "in qua fecit castellum Warham," now

¹ "Rex igitur recessus regni providentius perlustravit, et opportuna loca contra excursions hostium communit. Munitiones enim (quas castella Galli nuncupant) Anglicis provinciis paucissimae fuerant; et ob hoc Angli, licet bellicosi fuerint et audaces, ad resistendum tamen inimicis extiterant debiliores." Ordericus Vitalis, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, ed. A. le Prevost (Paris, 1840), ii. 184.

² "Rex autem monitus quidem prudentia, qua consulere in cunctis Regi novit, immunita regni providissima dispositione perlustravit, ac ad arcendos hostium excursus tutissima castella per opportuna loca stabilivit: quae militum electissimo robore, et uberrima stipendiorum copia munivit." *Willelmi Calculi Gemmeticensis monachi Historia Normannorum*, in *Historiae Normannorum Scriptores Antiqui* (Paris, 1619), 291.

known as Corfe. At Rockingham land worth 26s. was waste "quando rex .W. jussit ibi castellum fieri," and at Stafford there was a piece of land in the manor of Chebsey "in qua rex praecepit fieri castellum quod modo est destructum." Windsor and Carisbrook are also described in terms that imply they were new.

Of other castles held of the King *in capite* the survey says that Earl Roger "construxit castrum Muntgumeri vocatum," and that at Oswestry, under Earl Roger, "ibi fecit Rainald castellum Luure." At Rhuddland in Flintshire, "in ipso manerio Roelend est factum noviter castellum similiter Roelent appellatum." At Rayleigh in Essex, "in hoc manerio fecit Suenus suum castellum," and William Malet "fecit suum castellum ad Eiam," *i.e.* Eye, in Suffolk.

With the building of five castles the name of William FitzOsbern is associated, and as he died in 1072, they can be approximately dated :

- (i) "Radulphus de Toden tenet castellum de Clifford. Willelmus comes fecit illud in wasta terra. quam tenebat Bruning T.R.E";
- (ii) "Castellum de Estrighoiel (? Chepstow) fecit Willelmus comes";
- (iii) "In Nesse sunt quinque hidae pertinentes ad Berchelai quas Willelmus comes misit extra ad faciendum unum castellulum," perhaps that at Berkeley itself;
- (iiii) of the castle of Wigmore, then held by Ralph de Mortimer, we read that "Willelmus comes fecit illud in wasta terra quæ vocatur Mere-stun"; and
- (v) concerning the "Castellum Ewias" the Survey says, "Willelmus comes qui hoc castellum refirmaverat."

This last entry is of particular interest, since, as Mr. Round has pointed out, it refers to the rebuilding of the castle of Osbern surnamed Pentecost mentioned in the Chronicle in 1048 and 1052.

To this list of twelve royal and ten other new castles recorded in the Domesday Survey may be added a few more on the authority of Orderic :

In 1067 the King built a strong citadel (*validam arcem*) at Winchester, "intra moenia Guentae," and committed it to the custody of William FitzOsbern.¹

In the same year, shortly after the submission of the citizens of London, and his coronation at Westminster, Orderic says that William had left London and stayed for a few days in the neighbouring place of Barking, "dum firmamenta quaedam in urbe contra mobilitatem ingentis ac feri populi perficerentur."²

In 1068, following upon the famous siege of Exeter, William "locum intra moenia ad extruendum castellum delegit, ibique Balduinum de Molis filium Gisleberti comitis, aliosque milites praecipuos reliquit, qui necessarium opus conficerent, praesidioque manerent."³

In the same year, after William's campaign in the Welsh Marches and Northumbria, Orderic says the King built castles at Nottingham, York, Lincoln, Huntingdon, Cambridge, and Warwick.⁴ The three last named we have already met with in Domesday Book.

The Abingdon Chronicle also states that, at the beginning of William's reign, "tunc Walingforde et Oxeneforde et Wildesore caeterisque locis, castella pro regno servando compacta. Unde huic abbathiae militum excubias apud ipsum Wildesore oppidum habendas regio imperio jussum."⁵

The next question is, what were these castles? In a large number of instances there can be no doubt that they were the very moated mounts with appendent courts or baileys which Mr. Clark so persistently miscalled burhs. Sometimes, as at Nottingham, Exeter, Corfe, and

¹ "Intra moenia Guentae, opibus et munimine nobilis urbis et mari contiguæ, validam arcem construxit, ibique Guillelmum Osborni filium in exercitu suo praecipuum reliquit." Ordericus Vitalis, ii. 166.

² *Ibid.* ii. 165. The *firmamenta* were the fortress now known as the Tower, and apparently that at the opposite end of the city called Baynard's castle.

³ *Ibid.* ii. 181.

⁴ "Rex itaque castrum apud Guarevicum condidit, et Henrico Rogerii de Bellomonte filio ad servandum tradidit. . . . Deinde rex Snotingheam castrum construxit, et Guillelmo Peverello commendavit. Haec Eboracenses ut

audierunt, extimentes maturata deditione vim declinaverunt, regique claves civitatis cum obsidibus dederunt. Ipse tamen, quia fidem illorum suspectam habuit, in urbe ipsa munitionem firmavit, quam delectis militibus custodiendam tradidit.

* * * *

Rex post haec in reversione sua Lincoliae, Huntendonae, et Gronteburgae castra locavit, et tutelam eorum fortissimis viris commendavit." *Ibid.* ii. 184, 185.

⁵ *Chronica Monasterii de Abingdon*, ed. Joseph Stevenson (Rolls Series 2, London, 1858), ii. 3.

the castle of the Peak, the natural strength of the position, or its elevation, rendered unnecessary the throwing up of a mount or building of a tower, but in the majority of cases the fortress consisted of the formidable earthworks with which we are familiar. So far as documentary evidence goes, it is evident that wherever this class of earthwork originated, it was introduced into this country by the Normans. The Bayeux Tapestry depicts several notable examples in Normandy itself, and shows such a castle as actually under construction at Hastings. We have also notices of at least a score of new castles in Domesday Book, and at every one of these places the castle consists or consisted of a moated mount and appendent earthworks. Such castles do not belong to any known system of defence or offence among the Saxons, but are proved and known to be characteristic of Norman warfare. In Normandy itself they abound. They are found in this country in almost every place where a Norman lord fixed the *caput* of his fief, and, as Mr. Neilson has shown,¹ the numerous examples in Scotland are confined to those districts which were affected by the Anglo-Norman settlement under David I. (1124-52), Malcolm IV. (1152-65), and William the Lion (1165-1214). In Ireland, too, as Mrs. Armitage has reminded us, the moated mount is to be found "only in the English pale, that is, in the part of the country conquered by the Normans in the twelfth century."²

There are also good reasons for supposing that these early castles were raised in the first instance with the especial object of rendering permanent the conquest of England. Such a scheme can only have been devised by the Conqueror himself, since, until his days, no one ruler was strong enough, or in a position to have raised, or caused to be raised, these numerous fortresses all over the land that enabled him to keep under control a hostile population.

Now a noteworthy point of interest with regard to these castles is their strategical position.

¹ *The Scottish Review*, October, 1898.

² *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland*, xxxiv. 276.

Those that were associated with towns were usually placed athwart the line of the wall, like the Tower of London, and the *arx valida* of Winchester, or just within the wall, as at Exeter and Canterbury, so as at the same time to dominate the place, and provide for retreat were the castle attacked by the townfolk. If the town were situated on a river, the castle was usually set where it could also command the waterway, as at York, Rochester, Bedford, Shrewsbury, Tamworth, Oxford, Wallingford, and Newcastle-on-Tyne.

Other castles, such as many of those on the Welsh border, were raised to guard the passes leading into Wales.

The strong fortresses of Lewes, Bramber, and Arundel, as clearly guarded the openings through the South Downs as did the castles of Guildford and Reigate those through the North Downs.

The sites of Pevensey and Hastings castles are expressly described by Orderic as having been occupied by Duke William at his first landing to serve as bases for his army and havens for his ships; and the castle of Southampton, and perhaps that of Chichester, probably owed its origin to the advent of additional forces for William after the Battle of Hastings.

The fortress of Carisbrook, which is described in the Domesday Survey in terms that show it was new, dominated the Isle of Wight, and William's own castle of Corfe, the Isle of Purbeck; while the castle of Rochester guarded the passage of the Medway, that of Windsor the waterway of the Thames, and the "new castle" in the North the passage of the Tyne.

There is one point concerning these early castles which is apt to be lost sight of, and even ignored, and that is the universal prevalence of the use of timber for their first defences. Not only were the earthen banks of the bailey or baileys crested with lines of vertical wooden palisades, but the great mount was also surmounted by a tower or stronghold of timber, with which the palisades of the bailey were so connected as to form one continuous line of defence.

Now a little consideration will show that this use of timber was dictated by the necessities of the case, since

the newly thrown up mounts and banks required a considerable time, varying of course with the nature of the soil, to consolidate before they could bear the weight of walls built of masonry. The use of stone construction in the Conqueror's time was accordingly confined, as may be seen at Exeter and Tickhill,¹ to the gatehouses, which were built from the first on the natural ground in a break purposely left in the enclosing earthworks. In a few instances, such as Corfe, Rochester, and the castle of the Peak, a naturally strong position was fortified from the first by walls of masonry, owing to the more usual earthen banks not being deemed necessary.

Such were the castles that were raised all over the country within a few years of the coming of Duke William; castles that from their very nature needed but a few weeks or even days for their construction; and when "destroyed," as we are told they occasionally were, could be as quickly restored by the renewal of the timber defences, the burning of which represented the destruction.

The earliest examples of the great towers of masonry, at Colchester and the Tower of London, are not earlier than 1087, and both are exceptional.² The majority of such towers were probably not built much before the reign of Henry II., to which period most of the surviving examples certainly belong.

¹ The Tickhill gatehouse is perhaps a work of the following reign.

² The early tower at Malling in Kent did not belong to any castle, but to a destroyed chapel or church of St. Leonard. Towers of like construction and

the same early date are attached to the cathedral church of Rochester and the parish church of Dartford. All three were probably the work of Bishop Gundulf.