

An archaeological investigation of Nottingham Castle

Today, the Nottingham Castle site is a Scheduled Ancient Monument incorporating the Ducal Palace (rebuilt in the 19th century) and its grounds, the cliff face and defensive curtain walls enclosing the Inner, Middle and Outer Baileys, Brewhouse Yard, the extensive man-made cave network inside Castle Rock, and the gatehouse and gatehouse bridge.

This is an exciting time for this 'beacon of power, protest and rebellion throughout the centuries'. In the £29.4 million Nottingham Castle Transformation project (2014-2020) 'one thousand years of history lie ready to be discovered on a site rich in archaeology and human interest', in 'the most significant heritage regeneration project in the UK today'.

For more information about the phases of building and redevelopment on the Nottingham Castle site see www.nottinghamcastle.org.uk/explore/history

Find out more about the Transformation redevelopment project at www.nottinghamcastle.org.uk/transformation

Useful reading

H. Gill, 'The Old Inns of Brewhouse Yard', *Transactions of the Thoroton Society*, XIII (1909), available at nottshistory.org.uk/articles/tts/tts1909/brewhouseyard1.htm

P. Whatnall (ed.), *Links with old Nottingham. Historical notes by J. Holland Walker* (1928), available at nottshistory.org.uk/whatnall1928/contents.htm

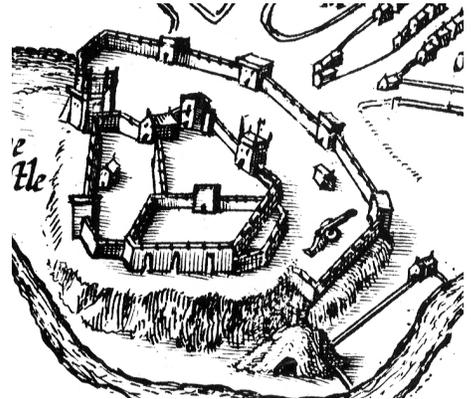
J. Beckett (ed.), *A Centenary History of Nottingham* (2006)

C. Drage, *Nottingham Castle: A Place Full Royal* (2ⁿ edn., 1999)

T. Roushanafas and K. Smart (Trent & Peak Archaeology), 'Nottingham Castle Redevelopment Project: Archaeological mitigation for enabling groundworks' (2016), available on ADS

G. Davies and R. Parker (Trent & Peak Archaeology), 'Archaeological Investigation of the Gatehouse Bridge' (2017), available on ADS

K. Smart and E. Stammitti (Trent & Peak Archaeology), 'Nottingham Castle Middle Bailey Excavation of an Adult Individual' (2017), available on ADS



Extracts from the Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) For We Dig the Castle 2018

1. BACKGROUND

Site Name: Nottingham Castle, Nottingham

NGR: SK 56985 39485

Scheduled Monument Number: 1006382

Geology: Nottingham Castle Sandstone Formation with superficial Head deposits

1.1. Context and opportunity

1.1.1. The historical site of Nottingham Castle currently consists of a walled area containing landscaped grounds and the 'Ducal Palace', arguably the finest Palladian mansion of its type in the country, positioned above a number of caves, situated on the site of the medieval castle.

1.1.2. The 'Nottingham City Council Museums and Galleries Service Strategic Plan 2014–2018' establishes the context within which a community-based research excavation of the Outer Bailey would be situated (36):

The development of visitor infrastructure included within this Strategic Plan, especially the major project for Nottingham Castle, means that the City is ideally placed to achieve the same benefits as other towns and cities with a rich historical heritage. The benefits of such investment in the historic environment are identified in the English Heritage report The Impact of Historic Environment Regeneration.

The Castle redevelopment will also achieve wider social benefits in line with and the case studies included in the Social Impacts Heritage Led Regeneration Report published by the Architectural Heritage Fund and partners [Victoria Baths Manchester and Wilton's Music Hall, London]. These illustrate the benefits of an audited track record of supporting community involvement, engaging with hard to reach groups, building local pride and creating volunteering and job opportunities. These projects are both located in inner city locations and offer transferable learning opportunities for Nottingham and the Nottingham Castle project in particular.

1.1.3. In the context of the Nottingham City Council Museums and Galleries Service Strategic Plan, this project has been established as part of an initiative to better understand the Nottingham Castle Scheduled Monument and to enhance its role as a focus for Cultural Heritage within the City and the Greater Nottingham area.

1.2. Historical background of Nottingham Castle

1.2.1. Originally founded in 1068 on the orders of William the Conqueror, Nottingham Castle was, by the later Middle Ages, the most important royal castle outside of London. It was the scene of many events of national importance, including its recapture for the crown by Richard

Following his return from the Third Crusade in 1194. Queen Isabella (wife of Edward II) and her lover Roger, Earl Mortimer were captured here and overthrown by Edward III in 1330, and Nottingham Castle was the seat of government for most of the reign of Richard III, who in 1485 left from here with an army of 12,000 men to meet Henry Tudor at Bosworth.

1.1.2. In 1642 King Charles I raised his Standard at Nottingham Castle, effectively starting the English Civil War as he sought to exert the supreme authority of the Crown over Parliament. The Castle was, however, held throughout the war by a Parliamentary garrison under the command of Colonel Hutchinson, whose wife maintained a diary account of the siege.

1.1.3. Following the execution of King Charles, the Castle was still considered so formidable, and the risk of its seizure by a hostile force or tyrant so problematic, that Parliament, meeting here in 1652, decreed that it be completely destroyed. The medieval castle effectively disappeared.

1.1.4. After the Restoration, the site was sold to William Cavendish, first Duke of Newcastle and exiled Royalist commander, who had the site remodelled. The Duke did not, however, live to see his palace completed in 1679 and his heirs left the site empty for much of its remaining history.

1.1.5. In the early 19th century the 4th Duke opposed popular cries for parliamentary reform and, following his reported opposition to the Reform Bill in the House of Lords, the Castle was burned down on 10th October 1831 during a night of riots. The first Great Reform Act followed in the following year, the events at Nottingham persuading Parliament, and the House of Lords especially, of the strength of popular feeling for reform.

1.1.6. The building lay, a burned-out ruin, until the 1870s, when the Director of Nottingham Art School, along with Henry Cole, the evangelical first Director of the Victoria & Albert Museum, supported the Corporation of Nottingham in their aim to restore the palace as a public museum. On 3rd July 1878 the Museum was formally opened by the Prince and Princess of Wales as the first municipal art gallery and museum outside of London, with a collection of art and design objects designed to mirror the Victoria and Albert Museum and to inspire high quality design and production for the lace industry.

1.3. Historical background of Brewhouse Yard

1.3.1. Brewhouse Yard, a two acre stretch of land between Castle rock and the River Leen, was known as 'Rock Yard' up until c. 1610. The brew house of Nottingham Castle was once situated here (Whatnall, 1928). At this time it was a constabulary free from the restrictions imposed upon the rest of the town, and became a 'very unsavoury district' (Gill, 1909).

1.3.2. The John Speede map of 1610 shows the chambers in the rock, with one building standing at the corner of the road leading into 'the yard'. A reference of 1610 states that 'visited' people were held at the Brewhouse and under the castle. It is believed that two caves behind the brick houses would have held such people, suffering from the plague and other diseases. More buildings were added in the late 17th century, as depicted on Thoroton's map of 1677. This shows a long row of tenements on the south side of the roadway, plus four detached houses with gardens situated between the tenements and the River Leen.

1.3.3. The row of red brick houses still visible today are of Stuart construction and were

probably built when the first Duke of Newcastle erected the present Castle about the year 1679, and used to accommodate some of the retainers of the ducal palace.

1.3.4. Badder and Peat's map of 1744 shows more buildings on the cliff, four tenements on the north side of the road and two inns near the entrance to the yard - 'The Trip to Jerusalem', and 'The Gate'. During the 18th century a number of decaying buildings were cleared away (Gill, 1909). The rock cut cellars of some of these buildings are still visible today, most notably in the cellars below Rock Cottage.

1.3.2. A pumping station was built in Brewhouse Yard, and could still be seen on the 1880 first edition OS map.

1.4. Previous Archaeological Evidence

1.4.1. In April 2014 the Outer Bailey of Nottingham Castle was subject to a programme of geophysical survey by Trent & Peak Archaeology, in advance of the first season of We Dig the Castle. This extensive survey of the southeastern part of the Outer Bailey combined geo-magnetic, earth-resistance, and ground-penetrating radar survey to produce an image of buried archaeological features and provide information about the location and depth of the interface between superficial deposits and the bedrock.

1.4.2. The initial season of We Dig the Castle excavations (2015) revealed that c.1000mm of ground in the area had been deposited during the early part of the 20th century as part of remodelling and landscaping. The soils that formed this made ground contained a broad mix of finds ranging from the Saxo-Norman period through to the 19th century. Allotments of a 19th century date were also identified, with a series of deep cut features c.400m below the cultivation horizon. These features formed a regular pattern and possibly related to the ornamental gardens that were located in the area during the 17th and 18th centuries.

1.4.3. During the second season (2016) the excavations concentrated on exposing more of these features below the cultivation horizon by extending the dig to the northeast of the 2015 season. Up to 34 features were exposed and a potential allotment building at a depth of c.800mm. The structure was left in situ ready for the 2017 season.

1.4.4. During the 2017 (third) season excavation work continued on the series of deep cut features, and the dig area was extended to attempt to reveal the full extent of what was now believed to be a 20th century platform for a searchlight truck. 19th century allotment building features below this platform were also investigated.

1.4.5. Prior to the geophysical survey of 2014 some restricted areas within the Outer Bailey were investigated through archaeological watching briefs on the installation of services and as part of archaeological mitigation works relating to the development of disabled toilet facilities adjacent to the gatehouse entrance to the Castle.

1.4.6. In addition to these specific interventions within the Outer Bailey, an impact assessment detailing the known heritage assets and interventions within the bounds of the castle was undertaken as part of the City Council bid for a Heritage Lottery funded redevelopment of the site.

1.4.7. The original earthwork castle was constructed in 1067-8 under the instruction of William the Conqueror. The earth and timber defences may have covered the entire extent of the later stone replacements, but this is uncertain (Drage 1989, 36, 43). The earth and timber defences of the Upper Bailey were replaced by a stone curtain wall in 1171-3. A stone keep was in existence by 1188 and a gate tower was constructed in 1373-7. The Middle Bailey earthwork defences were replaced by a stone curtain wall in 1171-89. A great hall and chapel are recorded from the 1230s, and major rebuilding (Richard's Tower and the State Apartments) occurred in 1476-80. The Outer Bailey was captured during a siege in 1194. A barbican may have been constructed at the Outer Gatehouse in 1212-13 (Drage 1989, 43) and from 1251 the Outer Gatehouse was rebuilt in stone. A stone curtain wall then replaced the Outer Bailey earthwork and palisade and interval towers possibly during the 1270s. One of the numerous caves cut into the sandstone rock beneath the Castle, Mortimer's Hole, was first documented by Leland in 1540 (Drage, 1989, 138).

2. OBJECTIVES

2.1. Archaeological objectives for the 2018 season

2.1.1. To continue targeted excavations of the Outer Bailey and to investigate other structures within the Outer Bailey in order to further develop our understanding of the archaeological deposits and features present in the area adjacent to the curtain wall, south of previous excavations adjacent to the gatehouse and disabled WC.

2.1.2. To begin targeted excavations of Brewhouse Yard in order to expand our knowledge of its development and the stratigraphy of the Castle Rock area as a whole.

2.1.3. To engage the community in the archaeology of Nottingham Castle and the surrounding area, to build relationships between the people of Nottingham and their cultural heritage.

2.1.4. To provide training to members in the processes and procedures of archaeological excavation and research.

To address the following specific research questions:

2.1.5. What further environmental evidence remains of the Medieval, post-medieval and pre-20th century gardens or allotments? (EMH 8.1.4)

Based on TPA report number 079/2017 the provisional aims are to:

2.1.6. Determine the extent of brick structural remains [0100] and (0118) to the east, establish its function prior to demolition and when this demolition occurred (Figure 2).

2.1.7. Establish the relationship between potential brick step [0126] and brick floor (0118) and wall [0100] to the east of the site.