

Paincastle

SO 167463
16186

Introduction

The impressive earthwork castle that dominates Paincastle commands the valley of the Bachawy from its northern edge. This vale is a natural thoroughfare between the heights of Llanbedr Hill to the north and The Begwns to the south. The settlement shelters behind the castle on largely level ground though a hollow east of Newhouse Farm marks the head of a shallow stream, tributary to the Bachawey. A nodal point for minor roads, Paincastle is just over 7km north-west of Hay-on-Wye.

This brief report examines Paincastle's emergence and development up to 1750. For the more recent history of the settlement, it will be necessary to look at other sources of information and particularly at the origins and nature of the buildings within it.

The accompanying map is offered as an indicative guide to the historic settlement. The continuous line defining the historic core offers a visual interpretation of the area within which the settlement developed, based on our interpretation of the evidence currently to hand. It is not an immutable boundary line, and may need to be modified as new discoveries are made. The map does not show those areas or buildings that are statutorily designated, nor does it pick out those sites or features that are specifically mentioned in the text.

We have not referenced the sources that have been examined to produce this report, but that information will be available in the Historic Environment Record (HER) maintained by the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust. Numbers in brackets are primary record numbers used in the HER to provide information that is specific to individual sites and features. These can be accessed on-line through the Archwilio website (www.archwilio.org.uk).



Paincastle motte and bailey castle, photo 94-C-0042, © CPAT, 2011

History of development

The first castle was probably built by Pain fitz John in the early 12th century, although Samuel Lewis would have us believe that there was an existing Welsh stronghold here known as 'Caer yn Elvael', and there is even the possibility that there was a Roman site here too. Fitz John was active in the region in the 1120s on the basis of charter evidence, though the earliest reference to the stronghold is some sixty years later. The castle then followed the same trajectory as other border strongholds being besieged and taken and re-taken by Welsh and Normans alike. It was for instance rebuilt in 1195 by William de Braose and his wife, also Maud, and it was reconstructed in stone by Henry III in 1231 and used as a base for his Welsh campaigns. In addition one of the bloodiest battles in Welsh history was fought close to the castle in 1198.

The name Painscastle first appears in its present form in 1231. Nearly forty years earlier, in 1195 it was *Matildis castrum* and in 1198 *castellum Paen*, the latter recognising Pain fitz John, the former his wife Maud de St Valéry. The link with Pain was maintained whereas that with Maud disappeared and in 1535 it was termed *Castell Payne*.

There is little to suggest that any settlement developed around the first castle, but a town (6089) is thought to have been established soon after 1231. Houses are mentioned in an order of 1233 and tolls from the weekly market and annual fair in 1264. Burgesses were recorded for the first time in 1309, when about 50 are mentioned, as well as 146 free tenants at least some of whom may have been living in the castle. In 1337, a similar number of tenants held 4040 acres of land. Without doubt the 13th and 14th centuries witnessed the years of maximum prosperity for Painscastle.

The castle was abandoned in the 14th century, but was refortified during the Glyndŵr revolt at the beginning of the 15th century. But as Soulsby implies the lack of later documentation tends to suggest that the town went into decay and must have contracted.

In later centuries Painscastle functioned as a resting place on a major drovers' route into England with half-a-dozen inns in the village up to the 1860s; and a market house that survived until the 19th century, although the market itself had been abandoned by 1800. In Radnorshire it remains one of those relative rarities, a nucleated settlement.

The heritage to 1750

It was claimed in the 1920s that during 19th-century work within the castle earthworks a tessellated pavement was uncovered and then reburied. There appears to be no corroborative evidence of the discovery, but it has been used to support the argument for a Roman site at Painscastle, and a further suggestion has been made that, as with Colwyn, the castle was constructed within a Roman fort. This too has yet to be substantiated.

The castle (50297; SAM Rd006), occupying a low hillock, consists of a large, 11m-high ditched motte that may have had a round keep, an inner bailey on the north perhaps defended by a stone curtain wall with angle towers, and an east gateway. No remnants of the stone castle dating to 1231 survive and the county historian Jonathan Williams at the beginning of the 19th century witnessed only 'a few loose fragments of the external walls'. There are traces too of an outer bailey.

The layout of the medieval town incorporates what has been classed as a triangular market place (or green?) north-east of the castle – still surviving as a patch of grass and edged by lanes on all sides – which it has been assumed lay at the heart of the settlement. A rectilinear street layout has also been claimed but in part this may be illusory for the thoroughfare

running east beside Newhouse Farm and then swinging south appears to be an addition to the road network. Soulsby has argued on the basis of the recorded burgesses that the town cannot have been much larger than its current size. However, it should be stressed that more work is needed to understand this layout, and that unfortunately the mid-19th century Tithe map is the earliest piece of large-scale mapping available to us. .

Earthworks (16226) lie in the field (OS plot 5929) on the north side of the castle, an indicator of shrunken settlement. Their extent yet to be established.

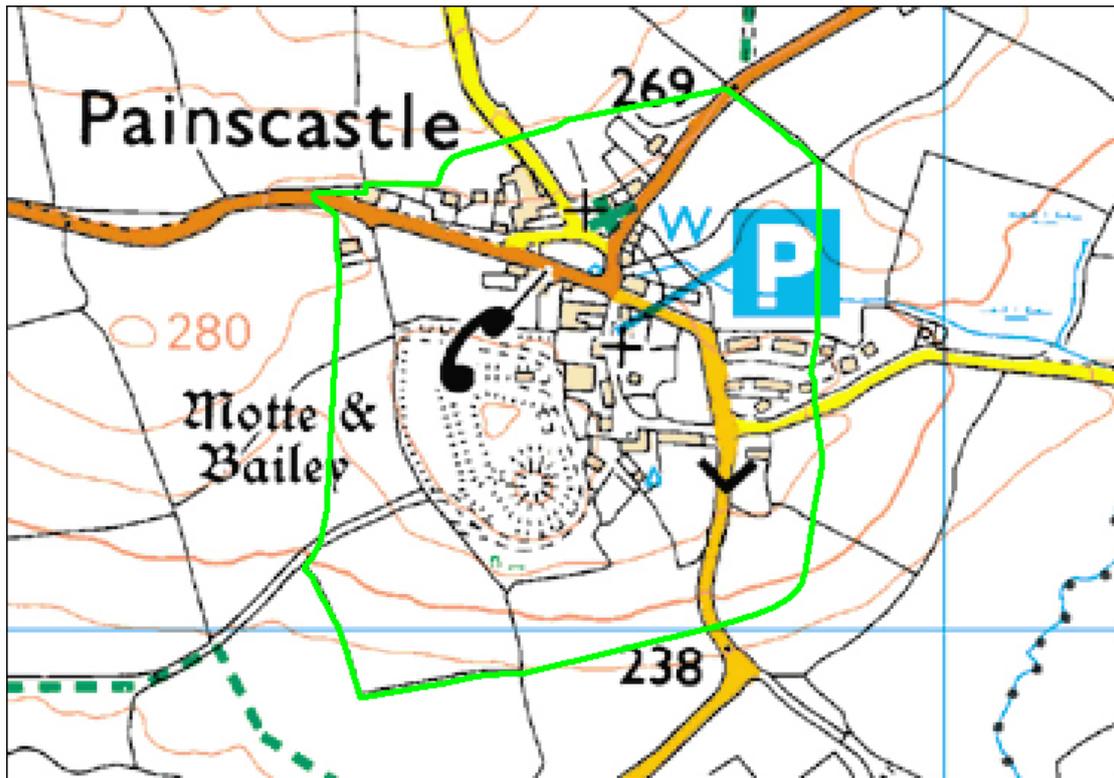
A few fragments of medieval pottery and a drystone wall (16091) were located to the east of Castle Farm during building works in 1976.

Ridge and furrow appears to be extensive in the vicinity of the village: in adjacent fields behind the village hall (16228; OS plots 4348 and 5645), north-east of the village (16227; OS plot 9347), and further away in fields close to the Bachawy below the castle. None of this has yet been proved to be medieval in origin.

Upper House (16045; Grade II* listing) has the timbers of an early aisled house embedded within it, perhaps from around 1400 according to the Royal Commission, although precise dating has not been possible. As such it may have been built as the high status residence of the stewards of the Earls of Warwick. It was rebuilt as a stone-walled storeyed house in the 17th century. A well, at least 3m deep, has recently been discovered just beyond the chimney stack at the east corner of the building.

The stone-built farmhouse of Pendre (16046; Grade II listing) has a 17th-century exterior including doorways and a porch, and may incorporate re-used masonry from the castle. A small cruck-built house lies opposite: known as the Old Shop (16092) it is also of 17th-century origin and has a similar listing, but has undergone major alterations in the past, notably in 1694.

Other buildings of some age include Newhouse Farm (16224) which has not been dated but is said to contain a 17th-century staircase and be of that date, although the front of the building is of the following century.



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