

= Skipsea Castle =

Skipsea Castle is a Norman motte and bailey castle near the village of Skipsea , East Riding of Yorkshire , England . Built around 1086 by Drogo de la Beuvrière , it was designed to secure the newly conquered region , defend against any potential Danish invasion and control the trade route across the region leading to the North Sea . The motte and the bailey were separated by Skipsea Mere , an artificial lake that was linked to the sea during the medieval period via a navigable channel . The village of Skipsea grew up beside the castle church , and the fortified town of Skipsea Brough was built alongside the castle around 1160 to capitalise on the potential trade .

In 1221 the castle 's owner , William de Forz , the Count of Aumale , rebelled against Henry III ; the fortification was captured by royalist forces and the King ordered it to be destroyed . The remains of the castle had little value by the end of the 14th century and Skipsea Brough failed to attract many inhabitants . The castle passed into the control of the state in the early 20th century and various archaeological investigations were carried out between 1987 and 2001 . In the 21st century , Skipsea Castle is managed by English Heritage and open to visitors .

= = History = =

= = = 11th ? 12th centuries = = =

Skipsea Castle was built around 1086 by Drogo de Beavriere , a Flemish mercenary and the first Lord of Holderness , following the Norman conquest of England and the Harrying of the North . The region was on the frontier of Norman power and the lordship was intended to protect central Yorkshire against potential Danish raids across the North Sea . Skipsea formed the administrative centre of Drogo 's huge estates , which stretched from the Humber to Bridlington , as well as serving as his caput , or principal residence .

The name " Skipsea " has Scandinavian roots and meant a lake that was navigable by ships . In the medieval period the site was an inland harbour , connected via a navigable channel to the North Sea , which in the 21st century is only around 2 kilometres (1 @. @ 2 mi) away . The surrounding region was referred to as an " island " during this period , due to the surrounding estuary and flood plains . The site of the castle was strategically important , as it lay on the main trading route through the marshes and was accessible by the sea ; the castle had military and economic functions , being designed both to control the newly conquered Norman lands and to manage trade in and out of the inland harbour .

The castle took the form of a motte and bailey design , and a dam was probably constructed to turn the surrounding marshy , low @-@ lying land into an artificial lake , called Skipsea Mere , in turn connected the channel leading to the sea . The complex had its own private harbour , and probably a boat yard and a fresh @-@ water fishery . By the end of the 11th century a church had been built to the east of the castle across the mere , and the village of Skipsea soon grew up alongside the church . Drogo settled 10 knights on lands near the castle in an arrangement known as a castlery or castle @-@ guard system , under which the knights helped to guard the castle in return for their estates , and one of them probably built his own smaller fortification at nearby Aldborough .

After the suspicious death of his wife Drogo fled England , and the castle was reassigned by William the Conqueror to Odo , the Count of Aumale . In 1096 it passed to Arnulf de Montgomery , but returned to the Aumales in 1102 , who held it until 1221 . Trade initially flourished and as a result William le Gros founded the fortified town of Skipsea Brough along the ridgeway just south of the castle , probably around 1160 . The town was intended to bring in valuable revenue to the earls , but would also have helped to defend the castle on its most vulnerable , overlooked side . The castle @-@ guard system lapsed , with the surrounding estates paying their rents in cash instead .

= = = 13th ? 14th centuries = = =

After around 1200 the castle declined in importance : it was poorly situated , the threat of Danish raids had now passed , and so the nearby manor of Burstwick became the new administrative centre for the lordship instead . In January 1220 William de Forz , the Count of Aumale by marriage , rebelled against Henry III ; part of their dispute involved the ownership of the estate of Driffild , 11 miles (18 km) away from Skipsea Castle , which Henry had seized the previous year , but William had been in disagreement with Henry 's policies for several years before .

William was promptly excommunicated and Henry moved quickly to suppress the revolt . The barons in the north were ordered to besiege William 's castles , including Skipsea , and William shortly surrendered himself to the King and was ultimately pardoned . Following the rebellion , Henry ordered Skipsea Castle to be destroyed , although it is uncertain to what extent this order was actually carried out . William passed on the castle to his own son , another William , but on the death of his son 's widow , Isabella , it passed to the Crown in 1293 .

Skipsea Mere was drained in the second half of the 14th century and by 1397 the castle was considered worthless : the 20 acres (8 @. @ 1 ha) of land around it became used for pasturing animals . The counts of Aumale used the manor house at nearby Cleeton when they visited the area . Probably because of its poor location , the town of Skipsea Brough also proved unsuccessful as a commercial site . There were only three burgesses in the town paying rent in 1260 , and by the late 14th century the town was largely abandoned ; in 1377 there were only 95 people registered for the poll tax in the two settlements of Skipsea and Skipsea Brough combined .

= = = 15th ? 21st centuries = = =

Further drainage of the mere occurred around 1720 and its land was reclaimed for farming . The ground remained marshy and still occasionally flooded at the start of the 20th century . In 1911 the castle was placed into the guardianship of the Commissioners of Works and Public Buildings , later passing into the control of the government heritage agency English Heritage . Archaeological surveys of the site were carried out in 1987 , 1988 , 1992 and 2001 .

The castle is protected as a Scheduled Monument under UK law and the remaining earthworks generally well preserved , but between 2010 and 2014 English Heritage expressed concerns about its condition and the impact of drainage , and the consequent drying out of the land , on the castle 's earthworks . Only a handful of buildings survive in the castle 's planned town of Skipsea Brough .

= = Architecture and landscape = =

Skipsea Castle was a motte and bailey design , with the two parts of the fortification divided by Skipsea Mere . The mere surrounded the motte ; the south @- @ east corner of the mere was cut off by two causeways to the south and east of the motte . Eels were recorded being caught in the lake during the 13th century , and the south @- @ eastern corner may have formed a fresh @- @ water fishery . A curved channel , approximately 25 by 200 metres (82 by 656 ft) in size and ultimately leading to the North Sea , flowed around down the south @- @ west side of the motte , giving boats access to wharves along the inside of the bailey , and concluded in a possible boat yard at the eastern end of the channel . There may have been an additional inland harbour just to the west of the bailey , but archaeologists are divided on this issue .

The motte , constructed from sand and gravel , was deliberately built on a natural glacial mound , making it appear unusually large . It is 100 metres (330 ft) in diameter and 11 metres (36 ft) high , with a 0 @. @ 25 acres (0 @. @ 10 ha) of space on the top , protected around the base by a 1 @. @ 5 metres (4 ft 11 in) high bank and a ditch up to 10 metres (33 ft) wide , although when first built these would have been taller and deeper than today . There was a timber keep on the motte , and possibly a stone gatehouse at the south @- @ east corner , leading onto the earthwork causeway that crossed the mere south to link the motte with the bailey . The eastern causeway linked the motte with the church in Skipsea village .

The bailey was approximately 300 by 100 metres (980 by 330 ft) , covering an area of around 8 @. @ 25 acres (3 @. @ 34 ha) , curving around the west and south side of the castle . Its

earthworks were built from clay , with a rampart up to 4 metres (13 ft) high , protected by a 10 @-@ metre (33 ft) wide ditch , originally up to 4 metres (13 ft) deep . The main entrance to the bailey was positioned on the southern side , and was known as Bail Gate and guarded by a gatehouse , with a subsidiary entrance on the north side , linked by a path . A break in the earthworks , now called Scotch Gap , was cut out during the 13th @-@ century destruction of the castle , and the bank has been damaged in other ways from the installation of drainage works .