

= Buckton Castle =

Buckton Castle is a medieval ringwork near Carrbrook , Stalybridge , England . It is listed as a Scheduled Ancient Monument due to its proximity to the Buckton Vale Quarry . The castle is oval , with a stone curtain wall 3 metres (10 ft) wide , surrounded by a ditch 10 metres (33 ft) wide and 6 metres (20 ft) deep . Buckton Castle was probably constructed for William de Neville in the late 12th century ; it was lying derelict by 1360 . The small number of finds retrieved during archaeological investigation of the site indicates that Buckton Castle may not have been completed .

In the 16th century , the site was used as a beacon for the Pilgrimage of Grace . During the 18th century , the castle was of interest to treasure hunters following rumours of the presence of buried treasure . It was used as an anti aircraft decoy site in the Second World War . The castle is overgrown with heather and peat , and there are no above ground ruins . Since 1996 , the University of Manchester Archaeological Unit has been involved in excavations to maintain the site and reveal more information on its origins and purpose .

= = Location = =

Buckton Castle lies 340 metres (1 @, @ 120 ft) above sea level on Buckton Hill , a steep sandstone ridge (grid reference SD98920162) . To the south is the valley of the Carr Brook , and to the west is the valley of the River Tame . Buckton Vale Quarry is close to the east of the castle . Stalybridge is about 4 kilometres (2 mi) south @-@ east of the site . The castle 's positioning may have been to allow its garrison to guard the Tame Valley ; both castle and valley were in the medieval manor of Tintwistle . A manor was a division of land and administered by a Lord of the Manor or his representative ; in the case of Tintwistle , it was part of the larger lordship of Longdendale .

= = History = =

Buckton Castle was probably built in the late 12th century by William de Neville , Lord of Longdendale , although it is possible that it was constructed for the Earls of Chester before Longdendale was given to de Neville . A late 12th @-@ century date would make it contemporary with other castles in Greater Manchester such as Dunham , Manchester , Stockport , and Ullerwood . It is common for castles to be built first in timber and then rebuilt in stone , but Buckton was a stone structure from the start . It is likely that it was the centre of the lordship of Longdendale , as it is the only castle within its boundaries ; however , a dearth of artefacts from the site suggests that construction may never have been completed .

The earliest documented evidence dating the castle was in 1360 , when an estate survey recorded that " there is one ruined castle called Buckeden and of no value " ; At the time , the lordship of Longdendale was the property of Edward , the Black Prince , and the castle lay derelict . That the castle had fallen out of use by this period is consistent with the use of other castles in the Greater Manchester area ; by the 13th century , apart from at Dunham Castle , there was no indication of activity in castles in Greater Manchester . During the 16th century , the site was used as a beacon during the Pilgrimage of Grace .

The castle has been the subject of antiquarian studies since the 18th century , and was originally thought to have been the location of an Iron Age hill fort . The interior of the castle has been damaged by the random insertion of trenches by treasure hunters since the early 18th century . Quarrying in the nearby Buckton Vale Quarry threatened to encroach onto the site and led to the castle 's protection as a Scheduled Ancient Monument on 9 July 1924 . It is the oldest ruined building in the Tame Valley . During the Second World War the castle was used as an anti @-@ aircraft decoy until 1943 , when it was felt to be no longer necessary .

Excavations at the site have been undertaken by the University of Manchester Archaeological Unit (UMAU) on behalf of Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council since 1996 . The work was partly

funded by a £ 300 @, @ 000 grant from Tameside Council . Initial excavations were to repair some of the holes made by treasure hunters and included test @-@ pits , but in 2007 the unit began more extensive work to investigate the site and determine its use and a date for its construction . The final season of the excavation will be completed in 2009 . Trenches have revealed that the castle had a stone wall and a gateway with a tower , but no internal buildings have been discovered . The first dating evidence was found in 2008 , underneath the collapsed gateway ; it consisted of some animal bones and shards of locally produced pottery from the 12th ? 13th centuries . Today , the site is overgrown with heather and peat .

= = Layout = =

Buckton Castle is a ringwork castle , which is a roughly circular area enclosed by defences such as a ditch ; a ringwork is similar to a bailey from a motte and bailey castle . The castle is oval , measuring 35 metres (115 ft) across the minor axis and 45 metres (148 ft) along the major . It is surrounded by a 10 @-@ metre (33 ft) wide and 6 @-@ metre (20 ft) deep ditch dug into the sandstone . The entrance to the ringwork is to the northwest of the site . Near the entrance are the possible remains of a stone tower . On the south @-@ facing side of the site are the remains of a stone curtain wall 3 metres (10 ft) thick . Excavations in 1996 by the University of Manchester Archaeological Unit have shown that what was thought to be the bailey was in fact of recent origin ? probably part of the anti @-@ aircraft decoy ? and did not date back to the medieval period . The north @-@ west gateway was protected by a stone tower 5 by 4 metres (16 by 13 ft) , with 1 @. @ 2 @-@ metre (3 @. @ 9 ft) thick walls ; the wall thickness suggests the tower was probably two storeys high .

The interior of the castle is artificially raised 1 @. @ 5 metres (5 ft) above ground level . Ringworks were an uncommon form of fortification in medieval England , with the majority of castles being motte @-@ and @-@ baileys , as demonstrated by the fact that Buckton Castle was one of only three ringworks in the historic counties of Cheshire and Lancashire . Buckton may be a ringwork because the local soil was too thin to build a motte . According to a 1360 survey of property in Longdendale , Buckton Castle may have had a hall and a chapel . In the 18th century , antiquarian Thomas Percival recorded a well within the castle , and walls of buildings inside the castle still standing to a height of 2 metres (7 ft) . However , these features were no longer obvious when George Ormerod wrote about the castle in 1817 , and have not been discovered by archaeological excavations .