

= Melbourne Castle =

Melbourne Castle was a medieval castle in Melbourne , Derbyshire . It was built on the site of an earlier royal manor house that had provided accommodation for noblemen hunting in a nearby royal park in the reign of King John . Construction of the castle was started in 1311 by Thomas , 2nd Earl of Lancaster , and continued until 1322 , shortly before his execution , but the work was never fully completed .

From the early fourteenth century , Melbourne Castle was mainly in the possession of the Earls and Dukes of Lancaster or the crown . Improvements and repairs were made , notably by John of Gaunt , and the building was in generally good condition throughout the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries . John I , Duke of Bourbon , was kept at Melbourne for 19 years after his capture at the Battle of Agincourt in 1415 , and the castle was considered as a possible prison for Mary Queen of Scots , although events led to her incarceration elsewhere .

The castle was in decline by the end of the reign of Elizabeth I. Although the stonework was sound , minimal maintenance had led to significant deterioration of other parts of the structure . The manor was purchased in 1604 by Henry Hastings , 5th Earl of Huntingdon , who had his own castle in nearby Ashby @-@ de @-@ la @-@ Zouch . The Melbourne property was then demolished and used as a source for building materials . All that remains of Melbourne Castle today is a section of wall about 15 m (50 ft) long and 4 m (13 ft) high and some foundations ; nothing is known of the internal layout of the former building . The ruins are grade II listed and the site is a scheduled monument . There is no public access to the site .

= = Background = =

Melbourne is a town in South Derbyshire close to the River Trent , which may have originated as buildings associated with the royal manor to the south of the nearby settlement at Kings Newton . Melbourne Castle was constructed on the site of an earlier manor house of unknown date ; there is an old tradition that the manor was originally established in about the year 900 , during the reign of Alfred the Great , but there is no evidence for this . As recorded in the Domesday Book , the manor of Melbourne and its lands were the property of King Edward the Confessor prior to the Norman Conquest . The property then passed into the hands of William I of England . After creating the Diocese of Carlisle in 1133 , Henry I gave the manor for life to Æthelwold , the first bishop . Some time later , the diocese built a palace nearby on the site of what is now Melbourne Hall . When Bishop Æthelwold died in about 1156 , the manor reverted to the crown .

A royal hunting park close to Melbourne was probably created by King John around 1200 , and the King is known to have stayed at the manor house on at least five occasions . John gave the manor and its lands to Hugh Beauchamp , although they appear to have soon reverted to the crown , being gifted by Henry III to Bishop Walter Mauclerk of Carlisle in about 1230 . The estate returned to the crown on the bishop 's death in 1248 , and Henry granted the land to his son , Edmund Crouchback , 1st Earl of Lancaster in 1265 . At some later date , the manor appears to have been granted to a Philip Marc , before passing to Thomas , 2nd Earl of Lancaster , the King 's son . This was in 1298 when he came of age , his father having died two years earlier . Early references to the house itself are rare , but there are records of repairs to the gutters in 1246 and to the roof of the King 's Chamber in 1248 .

= = Description = =

The castle was built to the east of the fourteenth @-@ century town on a slightly raised location . The area enclosed within the castle 's outer walls was about 2 @.@ 8 ha (7 acres) , but with outbuildings , other ancillary constructions and orchards , the total area has been estimated to be at least 8 ha (20 acres) . The walls were constructed with rubble faced with ashlar , and even without their former polished facings the walls are about 3 m (10 ft) thick .

All that is known of the appearance of the castle is from contemporary drawings . Although these

may seem fanciful to modern eyes , there are better preserved sites which share some features . Tutbury and Pontefract castles both have similar gatehouses and chapels , and Tutbury 's motte and Pontefract 's curtain wall are also close in style to those in the illustrations . Sandal Castle has a multi @-@ angular tower like those depicted , and this feature is confirmed at Melbourne by foundations which still remain .

A bakehouse , kitchen and chapel are recorded , as well as the hall , great chamber , and drawbridge , but the details of the internal layout for the castle are unknown .

= = History = =

= = = Early years = = =

Earl Thomas granted the manor to his steward , Robert de Holland , in February 1308 . In 1311 , Robert obtained a licence to crenellate from Edward II in order to fortify the manor house , and the more modest earlier building was converted into a castle between 1311 and 1322 . Local tradition says that the stone was obtained from a quarry on the site of what is now Melbourne Pool . The records show £ 1 @, @ 313 was spent on the project in the year 1313 ? 14 , of which £ 548 was paid to masons for dressing stone . Several masons working on the project were involved in an affray at Ravenstone in 1315 . The important medieval buildings in Melbourne were constructed from the local bedrock , Millstone Grit . This is a coarsely grained sandstone which can be worked to produce good @-@ quality ashlar . The village was centred around the church , castle and High Street until the late eighteenth century .

Earl Thomas , with other barons , captured King Edward 's favourite , Piers Gaveston , and killed him in 1312 . Nevertheless , the King stayed at Melbourne in 1314 . For a time , after Edward 's defeat at Bannockburn , the earl , a friend of the Scots , controlled most of England , but by 1321 , Edward had raised an army and driven Thomas from the Midlands . The Lancastrian castles at Melbourne and Tutbury were left deserted and looted by the local populace . Earl Thomas was finally defeated at the Battle of Boroughbridge in 1322 . He was swiftly executed , and Robert de Holland was beheaded in 1328 . The King sent a garrison to Melbourne and appointed a steward , Ralph Basset , to replace the incumbent , John de Hardedeshull . In March , those who had stolen from the castle were arrested , and by April Edward had withdrawn his troops . He appointed Robert Tocher and Roger de Beler in 1323 to help administer his possessions in Melbourne using money obtained from confiscations of rebel property in Staffordshire . Edward stayed at Melbourne again in 1325 , and while there he issued a right to collect tolls to the men of nearby Swarkestone to repair the bridge over the Trent .

= = = Lancastrian improvements = = =

The castle , still unfinished at the time of Thomas ' execution , and its lands , remained as crown property until it was bestowed on Henry , 3rd Earl of Lancaster , Earl Thomas ' brother , in 1327 . In turn , it passed to Henry 's son , the fourth earl , who became the first Duke of Lancaster . At the time of the duke 's death in 1361 , his constable was Ingram Fauconer , who received an annual life stipend of £ 10 , a further £ 5 going to his wife . Henry 's heiress was Blanche , wife of John of Gaunt . Duke John confirmed Fauconer 's pension when he came into possession of the Lancastrian lands .

Peter Melbourne was made keeper of the Melbourne estate in 1377 with an annual income of £ 10 . He was granted another 66s 8d in 1386 , and 10 marks (£ 6 13s 4d) in 1395 . The last award was conditional on his not meddling with the offices of constable and keeper of the parks , which had passed on to his son , also called Peter . The younger Peter Melbourne was involved in the upbringing of the future Henry IV during the reign of Richard II . He was again appointed constable and steward of the Derbyshire manor in March 1399 , although he gave up his office in April in return for an annuity from King Richard , who had confiscated the Lancastrian estates when John of

Gaunt died earlier that year . Upon Henry 's seizure of the throne , Peter was confirmed as constable and in October 1399 , his annuity was increased from £ 10 to 100 marks (£ 66 8s) ; in the following year he was awarded land in Derbyshire confiscated from Thomas Merke , Bishop of Carlisle , co @-@ leader of plot against the King .

The Duchy of Lancaster continued to improve and expand the property through the 14th and 15th centuries . John of Gaunt had windows glazed in the Communal Hall and the Great Chamber in 1392 / 3 , along with other works . He repaired a drawbridge in 1393 / 4 and made plumbing improvements in 1399 / 1400 , using lead acquired as a forfeit two years earlier .

For 19 years , the castle served as a prison for John I , Duke of Bourbon after he was taken at the Battle of Agincourt in 1415 . His custodian was a Nicholas Montgomery the Younger . Nineteenth @-@ century local historian John Joseph Briggs claimed that during the Wars of the Roses , the castle was partially dismantled by the Lancastrian forces of Margaret of Anjou , but since her campaign was along the line of the Great North Road , it was Melbourne , Cambridgeshire she sacked , not its Derbyshire namesake .

In 1545 , antiquarian John Leland reported to Henry VIII the property was in good enough shape that it was described as " praty and yn meately good reparation " perhaps following repairs in the reign of Edward IV , when Sir Ralph Shirley , a commander at Agincourt , was governor of the castle .

= = = Decline = = =

When Elizabeth I became queen , she ordered a survey of her castles . A 1562 report told her that only ten castles in the north of her realm were worth keeping ; Melbourne was not one of these . A further survey in 1576 reported that , although the stonework was in good condition apart from one chimney and window , the timbers were perished , the lead roof was full of holes , one kitchen was on the verge of collapse , and another needed its floor replacing . In the same year , George Talbot , 6th Earl of Shrewsbury wrote to the queen to assure her that the castle was in good condition , worth £ 1 @, @ 000 , and could be repaired for £ 100 . Since he was responsible for keeping the imprisoned Mary , Queen of Scots and her 140 retainers , he hoped to get her moved to Melbourne . In 1583 , the castle was inspected again to see if it was suitable to house the captive queen . Although the rooms were sufficient in number and quality , the unfinished building was deemed " imperfect at every corner " . The large rooms would need subdividing , the floors were earth and plaster , and there was no paved courtyard " so as being out of dors you are in the myre , for it is verie foule and unpleasaunt to walk round about the said house " . In 1584 , Queen Elizabeth finally decided to move Mary to Melbourne , only for the plan to be abandoned following the Babington Plot to assassinate the English queen and place her Scottish cousin on the throne .

In 1597 , the castle was being used as a cattle pound , although a survey in 1602 assured Elizabeth that it was a " faire and anciente castle " , in the charge of Gilbert , Earl of Shaftsbury . The constable 's annual fee of £ 10 was the same as that paid to Ingram Fauconer 140 years earlier .

The castle and lands were bought for £ 4 @, @ 700 in 1604 , by Henry Hastings , 5th Earl of Huntingdon , whose family seat at Ashby de la Zouch Castle was just 11 km (7 mi) away . Melbourne Castle was destroyed between 1610 and 1637 so that its materials could be used in other construction . By 1629 , it is likely that all the worked stone above ground level had been removed ; Sir John Coke of Melbourne Hall obtained permission from the Bishop of Carlisle in that year to quarry stone from the castle foundations . Some of the facing stones were used to repair the weir at King 's Mill , seen by some at the time to fulfil the words of a local prophet that " the waters of the Trent should overflow the towers of Melbourne castle " . The Hastings estate was gradually sold off , and the castle site was sold by Earl Moira in 1811 .

= = Ruins and archaeology = =

A section of rubble wall about 15 m (50 ft) long and 4 m (13 ft) high remains , incorporated into outbuilding of the adjacent farm on its north side . The ruins and the later farmhouse are jointly

grade II listed and the castle remains are designated as a scheduled monument . The area to the south of the wall has been excavated to reveal the ashlar bases of two polygonal towers . The site is on the east side of Castle Street in a private garden to which there is no public access .

Some of the stone taken from the castle was used to construct the mid @-@ eighteenth @-@ century grade II @-@ listed buildings at 43 and 45 Castle Street , and other buildings known to have used the stone , but no longer extant , include old houses demolished to build the Castle Mill textile factory . The mill , now demolished , was said to have been built on castle foundations up to 4 m (12 ft) thick ; 15 Castle Street also rests on the old foundation wall . It is likely that the former Melbourne Furnace and the Furnace Farm barn also used recycled castle material .

An early nineteenth @-@ century excavation found underground apartments " of considerable extent and superior workmanship " , and excavations in the latter part of the same century found considerable foundations in the gardens of Castle Farm . Castle Mills housing estate contains a now @-@ covered well 2 m (6 ft) in width and 15 m (50 ft) deep , and work in 1961 uncovered massive 5 m (16 ft) foundations east of the old mill and on the same alignment as the existing wall . Excavations in 1969 ? 1971 found an extensive network of walls faced with ashlar , a door post , the base of a spiral staircase and evidence of an outer courtyard . Many stones had mason 's marks . During construction works in 1988 , masonry including the rubble centres of two large east ? west walls was found in test trenches . Apart from the area of the turret bases next to the standing wall , none of the archaeology is now visible .