Lyndford Castles

Now a small village on the edge of Dartmoor, Lyndford was a burgh in late Saxon times. Its situation, on a promontory overlooking the River Lyd, has steep falls on all sides except one. A rampart defends the level approach

The first castle of Lyndford was the ring work at the west corner of the promontory, now known as the Norman Fort. It did not stay in use for long and the present Lyndford Castle stands nearby, the parish church occupying the space between them.

At first sight the castle seems to be a motte and bailey earthwork with a square keep on top of the mound. This is an illusion, however, because the keep was built first and earth was piled around its lower part as if to emulate a motte. It is also questionable as to whether we can regard this building as a keep in the normal sense of the word. In 1195 a strong house for prisoners was erected and the 'keep' has been identified with it.

There is further complication in that only the ground floor is original, the upper stories being added after a gap in building operations. There is absolutely no refinement in the stonework, resulting in a grim tower, which seems to add weight to the prison theory. By the time the building resumed, a square keep was rather antiquated in any case. Internally, there is nothing to suggest that this tower was not a normal keep, though later alterations have been numerous. Even the cross-wall is a rebuilding.

Notwithstanding the circumstances in which it was built, the castle subsequently did serve mainly as a courthouse and prison. This was inevitable because Lyndford was the administrative center of the Forest of Dartmoor and the local tin mines. These provided important revenue for the Crown.