Saltwood Castle

Saltwood Castle is part ruined and part restored and sits upon a hill above the old Clinque Port of Huthe. Henry de Essex, Constable of England and Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports, is credited with the construction of the castle, at least in its stone form, at some point during the Anarchy.

The inner bailey occupies an oval ring work surrounded by a curtain wall of Norman masonry. Archbishop Courtenay added the two square towers, which project from the south curtain, but three odd Norman towers also remain. They project internally like the interval towers of Roman forts, which seem to confirm a date around the mid twelfth century when there was room for experimentation in such matters.

The eastern tower was later adapted to form the inner part of Archbishop Courtenay's handsome gatehouse. The entrance from the bailey is now blocked. This gatehouse, probably designed by the celebrated master mason Henry Yevele, his tall, cylindrical towers at the outer corners and a row of machicolations between them. It is big enough for a keep-gatehouse and it remains the inhabited part of Saltwood Castle, supplemented by more recent wings on either side.

Within the bailey there are, unusually, two halls. The ruined hall backing onto the curtain dates from the early fourteenth century as its window tracery reveals. The other is said to have been Archbishop Courtenay's audience chamber. It is largely a modern reconstruction, though the vaulted undercroft is original.

Courtenay is also credited with the walling of the triangular outer bailey, though the so-called Roman Tower incorporates older masonry. The outer curtain is at the present very ruinous, but it preserves two round flanking towers and a lower part of a gate tower. The approach to the latter is commanded by one of the towers of the inner curtain.