



*Fig. 1. Guildford Castle shell wall and keep, from the south. The shell is built of local chalk but the keep of Bargate stone. The image 'Guildford Castle (2)' is by Richard Nevell. Licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0 via Wikimedia Commons. Reproduced with thanks.*

## **Guildford**

### **7. Guildford**

When Guildford's first castle appears in documentary record in 1173-1174 (or possibly 1165-66), it was a royal castle and presumably always had been, though its precise origins are not known. Henry I and Stephen issued charters at Guildford, presumably at a castle. With its motte and bailey plan, a late eleventh-century origin is likely. It remained a royal castle. In the mid-thirteenth century considerable sums were spent on maintenance, including some specifically on the keep, which contained a hall and chamber for the sheriffs of Surrey. From the fourteenth century onwards the site seems to have been neglected, functioning mainly as the county prison for Surrey and Sussex.

Clark's argument, that the rectangular *donjon* on the motte and its surrounding wall comprised the castle's inner ward, was later refuted by Malden. The masonry of the two structures differs in style and geology: local chalk for the wall but Bargate stone (from a few miles away) for the *donjon*. The building of the *donjon* interrupted the line of the outer wall. The latter represents an earlier shell keep, itself (Malden argued) a successor to a timber structure of the preceding

century. That it had buildings against at least some of its inner face was shown (at the time) by the survival of a three-tier garderobe on the south side, suggesting a domestic structure at a point which was, in any case, too close to the *donjon* to be contemporary with it. Sockets (then observed) in the inner face of the wall were perhaps further indications of the situation of the postulated domestic building. Malden's interpretation was followed by some (e.g. VCH 1911) but Clark's view continued to be quoted by others (e.g. King 1983). Clark, while believing the *donjon* and outer wall to be contemporary, also noted the garderobes and saw a shell-keep analogy ("a circular wall, like a shell-keep": 1884, II, 68).

It seems likely, as is now generally argued, that the outer wall represented an earlier shell-keep. But since the only known features relating to domesticity were garderobes, it is also possible that it was always a ring-wall surrounding a *donjon*: the present one having had a (timber?) predecessor. A drawing of around 1600 (fig. 6) shows the shell wall with an entrance and crenellations; another of 1861 shows a tower on its perimeter, with a small window

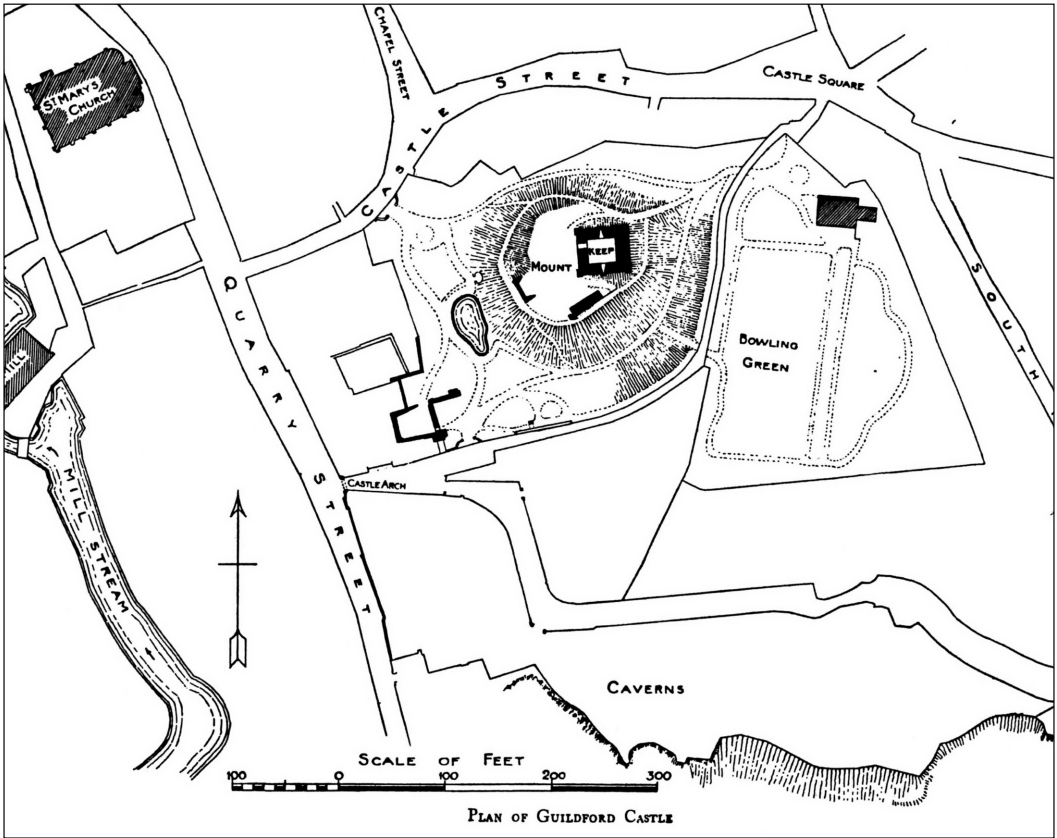


Fig. 2. Guildford Castle plan. From *VCH Surrey, Vol, III, 1911*. The motte is probably 11th century. The shell walls early-mid 12th century.

(Alexander 2006, 20, 27) (fig. 4) perhaps now represented by a fragment of projecting wall and perhaps also the location of the garderobes observed in the late 19th century (which no longer survive). The two straight stretches of wall now surviving suggest this putative shell-keep was of polygonal plan. The wall was built to encase the upper eleven-twelve feet of the motte, and not, as is more usual, on its summit. This may hint at an evolution of the site which is more complex than the above-ground evidence reveals. The motte seems to have been created largely out of the natural topography: perhaps the shell-wall retained the uppermost parts which were man-made?

Dating remains a problem at Guildford. The shell-keep has no architecturally dateable details, but is normally assigned to the early 12th century. The rectangular *donjon* which intrudes upon it lacks specific documentary dating and could have been built at any time from Henry I's reign until sometime in Henry II's

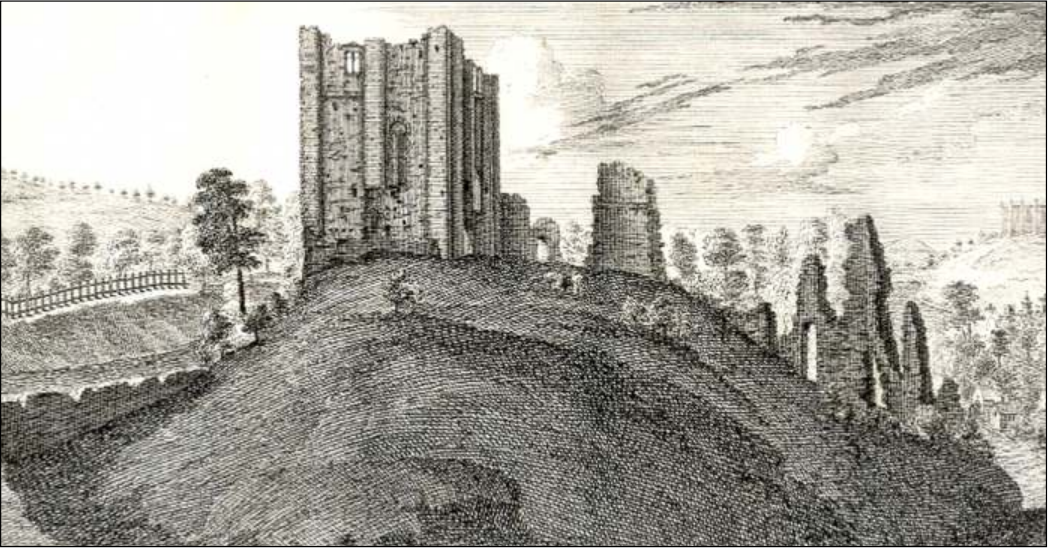
(but expenditure on a sufficient scale is not recorded in the latter period). The fabric of the *donjon* reveals two phases of construction, but by what period of time they were separated is not known. As finally developed, it contained a hall and chapel and had first-floor entry. The fabric of the shell-keep has been conserved at several times, as well as having lost features which were still visible in the late 19th century.

Another interpretation of the structural evidence has, however, been suggested (Poulton 2005, 135-136, 143, fig. 77), in which the masonry fragments on the motte shoulder relate not to a shell-keep but to a hall and chamber whose building was documented in 1247.

*Diameter:* 120ft (26.5m) N-S / 140ft E-W (37m)  
*Shell wall height:* Clark/Malden (est.) 20-25ft (6m+)  
*Motte height.* 23 ft (7m)

*Published refs:* Clark 1872; Clark 1884, II, 53-71; Malden 1901; VCH 1911, 554-556; Brown *et alii* 1963, II, 658-659; Renn 1968, 197-199; King 1983, II, 465; Poulton 2005; Alexander 2006.

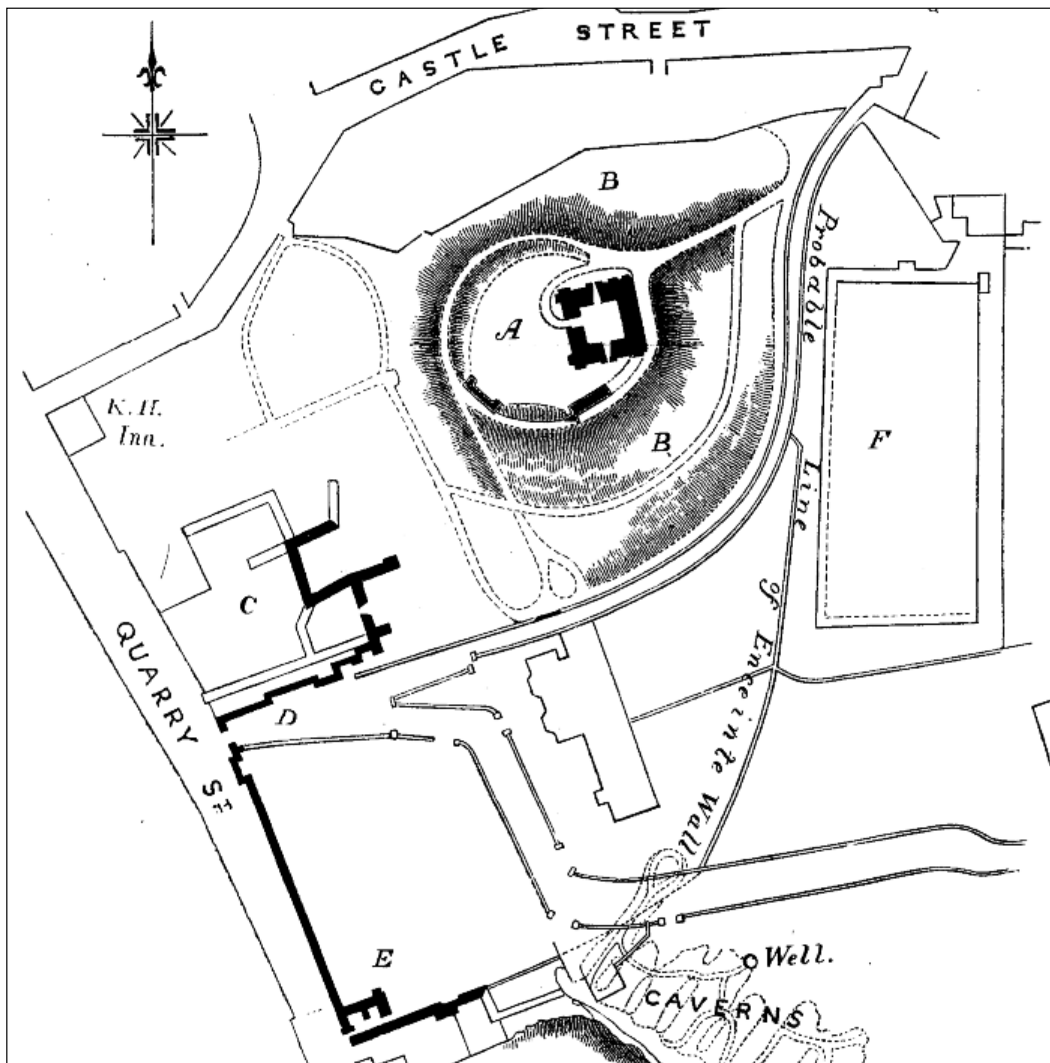




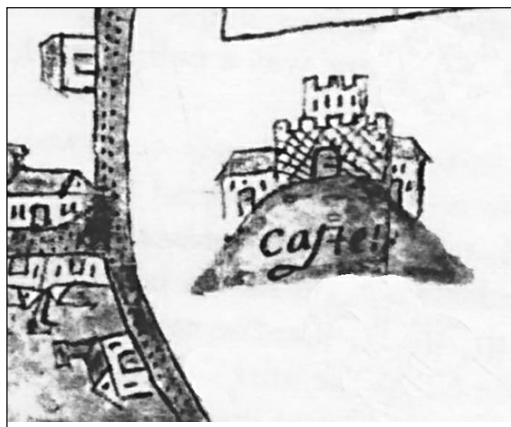
ABOVE: Fig. 3. Samuel & Nathaniel Buck, *Guildford Castle for the north-west*, 1737 (detail). In the largest chunk of masonry to the right of the keep there appears to be an inside ledge (or wall-walk?) along part of the interior shell wall. The shell-keep probably dates to the reign of Henry I, (1100-1135), heightened later.

BELOW: Fig. 4. Drawing of the motte with its buildings in 1861 by F. T. Lott, showing some remaining parts of the shell wall. Looking toward the shell keep from the south. In front of the keep there is perhaps a latrine chute just below a string course (not seen on fig. 1). Courtesy of Guildford Museum, (Catalogue no. G.7785).





ABOVE: Fig. 5. Guildford castle plan from G T Clark, 1884. The A-F keys are not mentioned in his entry (Vol. II). The plan shows two significant sections of shell wall masonry.



LEFT: Fig. 6. Illustration of the castle keep on a town map of c. 1600, (detail) with representative buildings on either side. Surrey History Centre, by permission of Lt-Col. Godwin-Austen. The whole sketch of the castle may be representational. The full illustration is in Alexander, 2006, p. 27.





ABOVE: Left: Fig. 7 Guildford. On-site model, in the keep, of the shell keep and entrance from the east. Right: Fig. 8. Shell keep & tower from the west.

BELOW: Fig. 9. Fragment of the shell wall, (buttress or turret), and rectangular keep to rear, from the south-west (cf. fig. 1). The shell wall fragment appears to partly revet the motte.







*Fig. 10. The scar on the north wall of the rectangular keep where the shell wall joined. The path follows the line of the original entrance. The east wall of the keep is 10ft lower than the west, The keep entrance is on the west side. The keep was heightened - note the crenellations of the first build, picked out in render.*