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1 Richmond: A Town and its Castle

Mathew Robinson.

Richmond Castle

Introduction

Richmond castle has had a long and varied history, beginning with the Norman invasion in 1066. Located on the eastern edge of the Yorkshire Dales, the castle stands as the centrepeice of the market town that has grown up around it, with a population of nearly 10,000.

The Norman Invasion

After William the Conquerer had taken control of Britain between 1066 and 1069, he gave away large areas of land to some of his most trusted followers. One of these was Alan Rufus, William's nephew, who was given a large estate – the land on which Richmond castle now stands – with the aim of suppressing resistance in Yorkshire and acting as a defence against the Scots and Danes. This estate later became known as the Honour of Richmond, with the name coming from the town of 'Richemonte' in Normandy (anon (a), nd).

Alan Rufus was a key figure in the Harrying of the North, and also constructed a castle at nearby Middleham in Wensleydale. Upon his death at the age of 53, his wealth accounted for 7% of the total national income, which in modern day terms is the equivalent of £83 billion, therefore making him the wealthiest person in Britain's history (Beresford & Rubinstein 2007, cited Narain 2007, n/a).

Figure 1. Southern Hill and River Swale

Richemonte

A literal translation of Riche monte is 'Strong hill', which is a fitting choice of name considering the location of the castle.

The area of land was carefully chosen so as to make the most of the natural defenses available. It sits high above the River Swale, with a 20m drop to the water below (Fig.1). The river is the second fastest in the country and curves around two sides of the triangular bailey, with more steep slopes adding to the natural defensive elements.

In addition to the obvious defensive benefits of the River Swale there were few people living further up Swaledale so it was remarkably unpolluted, providing a constant supply of fresh, clean water. Finally, the site of the castle provides extensive views in all directions, but particularly to the south – where, on a clear day, York can be seen – and east towards the North York Moors. This would obviously be useful for spotting any potential attackers from the more populated Vale of York, a long way off.

The Castle

Work was started on the castle in 1071 and it has stood for almost a thousand years, making it one of the oldest stone castles in the country, along with Durham and Colchester (anon (a), nd). Very little of what can now be seen is actually the original structure, as a lot has been added since, including the Keep itself which was only built in the late 12th century. The archway underneath the Keep, and certain areas of masonry along the east and west walls still remain, but even these features are well disguised amongst more recent additions. The Keep was built by Conan 'the little', who also constructed the barbican, replaced the wooden palisade on the southern flank with a stone wall and fortified the cockpit (Fig. 2). These changes were made in response to increased insecurity and turmoil at the time and were completed by Henry II.

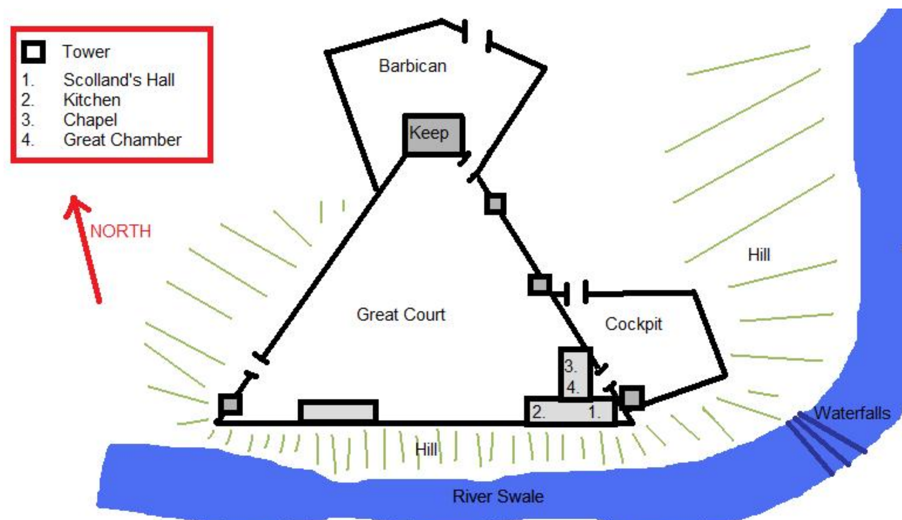

Figure 2. Diagram of the castle layout

In the south eastern corner of the castle are a number of important buildings where the Earl would have spent a lot of his time. These include Scolland's hall (Fig. 3), a two-storey building with a great hall on the first floor which would have been used for banquets. Other sections were added later, such as the kitchen in the 12th century and the Chapel and Great Chamber in the 14th. At this time, a large window was installed at the eastern end of Scolland's Hall, to provide better light to the area where the Earl would have sat.

Figure 3. Scolland's Hall – Showing holes for the beams to support the first floor and large arched Norman windows

The Keep, as previously mentioned, was a 12th century addition to the older gatehouse with walls 11ft thick towering 100ft above the town. It consists of three floors; the basement, a lobby and some chambers on the first floor, and a great hall on the second. There is evidence to suggest that there could have been another floor above this as a few beam holes, possibly for beams, remain along one wall. The gabled roof of this top floor would still have been well below the battlements, which could be accessed through stairways within the walls themselves.

The original gatehouse is still mainly intact, although a large number of alterations have subsequently been made. Upon building the Keep on top, the gate was actually blocked up, with the only access to the basement then being through a spiral staircase from the first floor. This was because access to the Keep was via the first floor anyway, allowing for greater protection of the water supply from the well in the basement (Vasey & Walmsley 2008, n/a). The roof of the basement, unlike others, was built of stone in order to provide

protection from fire, help support the rest of the keep and to help keep food cool. Around 1330, a ribbed vaulted roof, which can be seen in Fig. 4, was also added to the basement – an interesting sight for today's tourists who can once more gain entrance through the unblocked basement arch.

Figure 4. Vaulted ceiling in the basement

The castle has had many uses over the last millenium. Before falling into disrepair it held numerous important prisoners and changed ownership on a regular basis. In 1174, King William the Lion of Scotland was imprisoned there, as was David II in 1346 (anon (a), nd). Henry VII was another notable figure to have been Earl of Richmond and regularly visited the castle after his victory at the Battle of Bosworth Field. He then passed this honour on to his illegitimate grandson, Henry Fitzroy, before Henry VIII regained the title, which has belonged to the crown ever since (Peter Jackson, pers comm. April 2010).

War

In more recent times, the castle has been used as a barracks and again as a prison. In 1855 it became the base for the North Yorkshire Militia and a barracks block was built in the great court, whilst the keep was used to store clothing and arms. During the First World War it was used as a base for the Non Combatant Corps (NCC), a section of the armed forces for those who refused to fight on conscientious grounds. It also served as a prison for absolutist conscientious objectors who refused to help the war effort in any way, a group of whom famously became known as the 'Richmond 16'. They were among the first people to defy conscription on moral grounds, causing serious debate in parliament and the eventual reform of the prison service. This was as a result of many having mental breakdowns or even dying whilst serving their time in prison, although they were fortunate in the first place to avoid death,

the common punishment for refusing to fight on the front line. Figure 5 is a good illustration of some of the graffiti these prisoners left behind on the cell walls consisting of pictures, poetry and general information about themselves.

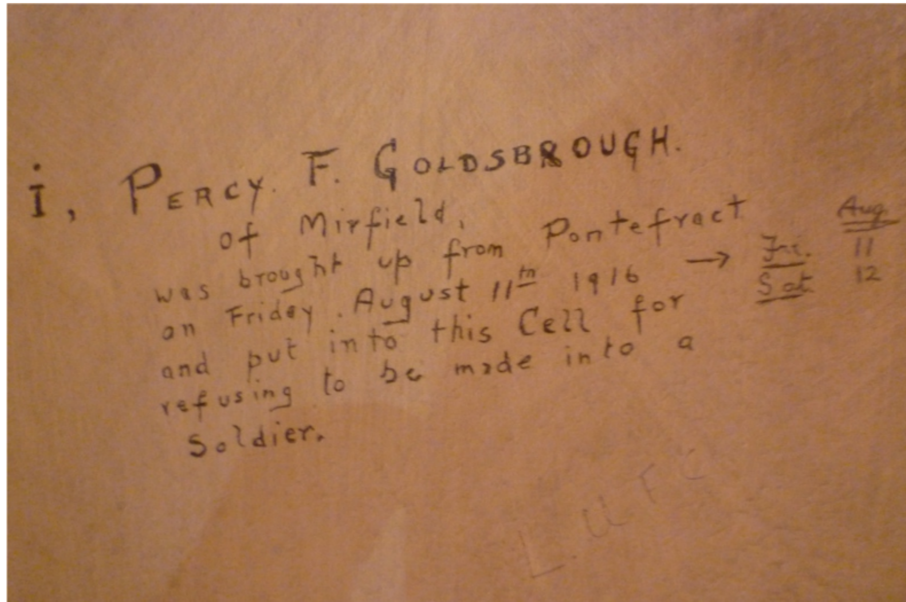

Figure 5. Graffiti from the cell wall of one member of the Richmond 16.

World War Two saw the castle again used to house military prisoners, whilst the Keep itself was used to spot enemy aircraft.

The Town

At the time the castle was built, three suburbs sprang up to house the workers – Frenchgate, Bargate and Newbiggin – all three of which survive to this day. Over the following 200 years the town increased in size, and more people began living just outside the castle walls to the north. In 1311 more stone walls were built as an outer bailey to protect this area of land from the Scots and these form the shape of what is now the biggest horseshoe market-place in the country (Peter Jackson, pers comm. April 2010). The original postern gateways still exist between some Georgian buildings that form the outer edge of this marketplace. Two bigger gateways – Frenchgate and Finkle street – were well fortified as they were wider to allow for greater traffic in and out of the market place making them vulnerable to attack. Even the name Finkle street indicates this as it means 'angled street' and reflects the slight bend in the street. This made it more awkward for enemies to see what was up ahead and gave the defending swordsmen more room to fight.

In Georgian times, the town expanded rapidly due to it's convenient location between the mining and knitting industries of the Dales and the ports of Newcastle and Hull. This brought a number of wealthy merchants to Richmond who greatly influenced the future of the town. Large portions of the outer walls were knocked down to improve access to the market place and new structures with their distinctive Georgian architecture were built in their place. Other

Georgian buildings in Richmond include the rebuilt Grammer School, which was originally opened by Queen Elizabeth I and attended by Lewis Carroll and the Bishop Blaize – the centre of the knitting industry, and The King's Head hotel. This was built by the Bathhurst family in 1718 who had made their money from lead mining.

It was at this time that tourism became an important factor and the continuing popularity of the King's Head hotel is testament to this. With the newfound local and national wealth from trading abroad tourism became more popular and the historic features of Richmond, situated so close to one of the most beautiful areas in the country, made it a very desirable destination. One notable visitor to Richmond was the famous landscape painter William Turner (anon. 2004, n/a), drawn by the romantic ruins of the castle and the river with it's beautiful waterfalls (Fig. 6). His paintings of Richmond only served to further enhance it's popularity as a tourist destination over the following centuries.

Figure 6. Richmond Fosse, right below the castle.

The town now relies almost completely on tourism, still benefitting from it's proximity to the ever popular Yorkshire Dales National Park and more immediately Swaledale (Fig. 7). The famous fell walker, Alfred Wainwright, chose Richmond as the only major town on his popular coast to coast walk, resulting in many thousands of tourists from all over the world passing through every year.

Figure 7. The view from the castle: Over Richmond and up Swaledale.

Conclusion

Throughout its life, Richmond Castle has been used for numerous purposes by many different people and has slowly evolved over time. Interestingly, it has

never been involved in any major battles, although there is some evidence to suggest that minor skirmishes with occasional Scottish raiding parties did occur (anon. (b), nd). Thanks to this unusually peaceful, yet still varied, history it is fortunately still standing proudly above the Richmond skyline. It is now owned by English Heritage and as a major tourist attraction in its own right will continue to fascinate for generations to come.

All the photographs featured in this article belong to Mat Robinson. To see more of Mat's photography visit: www.redbubble.com/ (http://tinyurl.com/2wkp87z) or http://www.richmond.org/arts/mat -robinson/index.html.

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2 A Spanner in the Works

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Is it time to throw out your old textbooks as researchers retrieve 40,000 year old DNA?

Seven years ago, Homo floresiensis caused a stir with its discovery on the island of Flores, Indonesia. If the hobbit caused a stir, the recovery of a single finger bone has the potential to cause a maelstrom. With the discovery of these two forms of human, the number of species of human around at just 40,000 years ago comes to four. As far as we know, Homo sapiens is the only one left.

The bone was found at Denisova Cave in the Altai Mountains, Siberia during excavations in 2008 (Krause et al 2010). The area is one of considerable activity during the Upper Palaeolithic with mtDNA evidence for Neanderthals (Krause et al 2007) and modern humans (Derevianko et al 2000, Goebel et al 1993). Throw in a third species of human, and the picture begins to get rather crowded.

The report in Nature describes, with a glorious pun that I only wish I could have coined myself, how the fossil finger points to a new species of human. The implications of this discovery could be great. If it really does represent a unique species, then all our textbooks are now outdated. Neanderthals were not the only species to share Eurasia with modern humans. They were also not the only ones to suspiciously 'disappear' once modern humans arrived either.

Johannes Krause of the Max Planck Institute, who's previous work has involved a comparison of Neanderthal, human and ape DNA (Green et al 2006) spoke to Reuters news agency about the find. Here, we find no certainty that the finger bone actuall represents a new species of human: It really just looked like something we had never seen before. . . it was a sequence that looked something like humans but really quite different (Fox 2010). However, it is pointed out that mtDNA alone does not provide enough evidence to verify a new species as it could be the result of interbreeding with Neanderthals, Homo erectus, archaic modern humans or another unkown species of human (Dalton 2010, 473).

The bone was found in a stratigraphic band dated to between 30,000 and 48,000 years ago in the same layer as a fragment of polished bracelet (ibid, 473). The mtDNA extracted from the specimen differs from Homo sapiens at 385 nucleotide positions. Neanderthals differ at only 202, suggesting that our new sibling branched from the family tree around 1 million years ago (ibid, 472).

What exactly does this mean for our theories?

There have traditionally been two camps when it comes to explaining how humans came to be present across the globe, the multi-regional theory which hypothesises that many different types of human evolved indipendently of each other in Homo sapiens, and the single origin theory which theorises a modern, recent point of origin from which Homo sapiens spread and replaced other archiac forms of human. The discovery of Homo floresiensis and now this discovert could possibly sound the death knell for multi-regionalists.

At the moment, it is uncertain whether the findings at Denisova Cave really do represent another species of human. As Willerslev points out, mtDNA evidence

alone is not enough to argue for a new species of modern human, nuclear DNA is the next step for this specimen (Dalton 2010). Once these results are in, we may have to re-examine our theories of Neanderthal extinction and modern human colonisation of Eurasia and Europe.

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3 An Update from Hungate

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The Site

The last buildings to occupy the Hungate site were warehouses with light industry and before that 19th century housing, demolished as part of the slum clearances of the 1930's (YAT n.d.). For those who have not visited the site on one of its popular Open Days or as a volunteer or placement worker, things are looking very different today. As a student in York I have been lucky enough to visit the site twice in my two and a half years here and so have been able to witness the changes going on, albeit in snap-shot style. On my most recent visit in April of this year I found the site much changed. The team have reached Anglo-Scandinavian layers and have unearthed numerous cess-pits, building plots and two sunken-featured buildings.

Figure 1: The remains of a late 10th century sunken building (left) and cess pits (right and rear)

During the first half of the 10th century it appears that the land next to what is thought to be a meander in the River Foss, adjacent to the Hungate site, was being built up using an as yet unidentified material which manifests itself as 'tiger stripes' in the stratigraphy. This is thought to have been for ground improvement and flood prevention. By the second half of the 10th century the land had been divided into equal plots of sixteen and a half feet defined by ditches and cobbled pathways. This is clear evidence of Viking Age town planning.

Figure 2: Distinctive early to mid' 10th century 'tiger stripes' slumping into an earlier cess pit

In the southern corner of the site there have been found Roman agricultural deposits and the site as a whole is dotted with Roman burials; both inhumation and cremation. Peter Connelly (Project Director), who was kind enough to speak to me about YAT's work at Hungate suggests that the landscape needs to be viewed from the perspective of those arriving in York from the river and that the sparsely used burial site on this marginal land would have been evocative from this viewpoint (pers. comm. 26th April 2010).

Figure 3: Remains of mid 10th century cobbled pathway which divided two plots of land

An Archaeologist's Perspective

Arran Johnson, a York graduate, kindly agreed to speak to me about his work at Hungate. Having graduated in 2005 Arran has been working at Hungate since January 2007, nearly the beginning, and so has experienced all the site has to offer so far. He told me life on site is varied with deposits from the Victorian period all the way through to Roman, and possibly further. Arran is also involved with local people, often working with the community archaeology team as well as placements from further afield. He told me that a particularly positive part of working at Hungate is being able to see a big urban excavation, with many related facets such as community work, operating so smoothly and to schedule.

Figure 4: Arran at work

The Local Community

When the opportunity for this excavation arose, during the planning process for Hungate York Regeneration's project, the City Council was keen for DIG: Hungate to be a long-running project which would involve the community. And that is exactly what it does. Hungate, now in its fourth year (of five), has had over 17,000 visitors. Peter Connelly believes it to be the most visited developer-funded project in Britain (pers. comm. April 2010). The commercial team are joined by the Community Archaeology Team on Wednesdays and Thursdays which is made up of anyone who's interested in getting involved. Young offenders have also taken part over the last 3 years. When I visited the commercial archaeologists were joined by an English Heritage placement, there for two days, and two students from Bradford.

There are also regular Open Days the next of which takes place on Sunday 1st August – Yorkshire Day. Members of the public are welcome to come and see the site, talk to members of the commercial team and view and learn about recent finds. The site is open from 10am-3pm and entry is free. As Peter Connelly told me; 'its not just archaeology for the archaeologists, its archaeology for all' (pers. comm. April 2010). This extends to the publication of the site also which will be accessible for members of the public as well as the academic world.

The Wider Community

YAT's Archaeology Live training event, which runs every summer in York, has been held at Hungate for the past three years and attracts budding archaeologists from across the globe. Peter Connelly explained the popularity of the site

to me. The opportunity to work on deeply stratified urban archaeology is rare and so people will travel a long way to train at Hungate, often returning the following year. As you can see from the map people have come from the USA, Canada and Europe as well as much further; there have been participants from Uruguay, the Cape of Good Hope and New Zealand.

Archaeology Live is a paid-for training school which teaches a range of skills from digging techniques and finds work to site recording, environmental sample processing and specialist seminars. As one might expect to get a place you must book early. You can book for as long as you want (or can afford!) from 1 or 2 day tasters (£50 and £90 respectively) to two weeks (£325) or more! For more information email trainingdig@yorkat.co.uk.

Figure 5: Map showing where Archaeology Live participants come from.

My thanks to Peter Connelly for talking to me and showing me round the site.

4 Interview with a Site Supervisor

Katharine Newman (mailto:kan501@york.ac.uk)

Most jobs within archaeology are field-based or related in some way to commercial archaeology. A job in field archaeology is one where every day you are in contact with the past, maybe unearthing objects that haven't seen the light of day for hundreds, or even thousands of years, or deciphering the outlines of an ancient, long-forgotten settlement. In short, it is a fascinating and demanding career.

Richard Newman is currently a site supervisor within the Cambridge Archaeological Unit (CAU) and has been working a professional archaeologist for 12 years. He has very kindly agreed to do an interview for the Post Hole to give us a bit of an insight into the daily life and times of a field archaeologist...

KN – How and why did you enter into field archaeology?

RN – I've actually been interested in archaeology from a very young age. I was a member of the Young Archaeologists Club (YAC) in my home town, volunteered as a teenager with my local archaeological unit and then pursued a degree in archaeology. Volunteering on projects is very important and gains you much needed experience, so I'd recommend that very strongly. Getting your first job in field archaeology is always the hardest -many employers require 6 months experience, so having a number of volunteer digs in hand is never a bad thing.

KN – Why do you enjoy field archaeology?

RN – Mud and big holes! Other than that, most people who study archaeology in any depth start to find one period or artefact that they find particularly captures their attention – but you can almost guarantee that the one type of site of that particular period or with that particular material culture is the one you will never get to work on. In reality you can't pick and choose the sites you dig, you just have to find some intriguing aspect or fascinating problem to solve on every site you come across – and you will come across a wide range of sites. In the last year alone I have excavated everything, from a Palaeolithic river bed to a 20th century telescope. The challenge, and fun, of being a field archaeologist is finding something that interests you everywhere you work – whether that be digging big holes, finding things or solving problems.

KN – Considering that an interest in a certain period or artefact type is normally what draws people into the profession, what would you say is your specialist field of interest?

RN – Well, personally I'm quite interested in deep stratigraphic sequences. You might expect to find such sites in urban areas that have seen the foundations of numerous buildings or Tells in the Near East, and they display a constantly changing sequence. Unlike landscape archaeology, where often each area of land has its own unique story to tell, with deep stratigraphic sequences you see one story piled on top of another, changing layer by layer. It gives you a very in-depth understanding of a small area and allows you to refine almost every archaeological technique in existence in order to cope with the complex sequence, giving you information and problems in equal measure. I'm actually currently working on a site with quite deep stratigraphy – there are buildings that are three hundred years old, on top of a cemetery, on top of a potential Saxo-Norman settlement!

KN – What projects are you currently working on?

RN – At the moment, I'm excavating the basement of a standing listed building, which is being converted for modern use. We need to excavate down to 3-4 metres below ground level, which is tricky considering that we're working undern¿eath a building. We currently have a conveyor belt to take the spoil away through the building! I have a couple of other projects where the excavation element has been completed and they're at stages varying between organising the specialist reports that need to be completed and some nearing publication.

KN – Clearly it sounds like you're a very busy man! Can you describe a typical day in the life of a site supervisor?

RN – A typical day varies wildly between two extremes – a day on-site and a day in the office. On a field day, my main responsibilities include making sure that everyone knows the current tasks they're supposed to be working on, co-ordinating the digging efforts and making sure that everyone's aware of what needs to be done next. On a post-excavation day, I'd be in the office, co-ordinating the specialist reports that need to be completed and composing the main grey literature reports, in preparation for potential publication, for whatever projects I'm working on at the time. Mainly it's only the big sites that make it to publication, and even then that depends on the material unearthed being considered interesting enough. Sadly, a lot of sites are deemed to be too uninteresting, although some are saved up and published in one amalgamated volume at a later date.

KN – In your time as an archaeologist you must have worked on many, many different sites. Are there any that stand out as your best or worst digs?

RN – I find that the best sites are often the ones that surprise you – when you're excavating a small site that no-one's expecting much of and you find something amazing! On some sites I have found gold jewellery and other similarly valuable artefacts, but the finds that really stand out in my mind are the things that give you a real connection with the people who created or used them. For example, on some wet or waterlogged sites you can find evidence of woodworking where you can still see all the tool-marks preserved in the bark and the woodchips still laying where they were discarded – as if whoever had made the marks had only just left. I love those kinds of immediate connections to people – another example might be when you find mistakes, a piece of pottery gone wrong or a mark where a chisel slipped, ruining the piece and you can almost feel their frustration as they threw it onto the rubbish heap and went back to start again. It seems to give you a small insight into a person, one who lived and died so long ago, and makes them human and recognisable – if the sites your digging are within the historic period it can even be possible to find documentary sources telling you who was living in the area at the time, thus deepening the personal connection. One of my best finds was actually a bowling ball and set of dominoes that had been thrown into a well! On the other hand, some of the worst sites I've worked on were those where there were too many things to investigate in the time we had planned! It's always very frustrating when you can't study features in as much detail as you'd like to.

KN – So, my final question! Would you recommend a job in the field to anyone currently undertaking, or completing, a degree in archaeology?

RN – It's a lot of hard work and you do have to endure some rough conditions, but if you're interested in archaeology it's worth trying. I think you've got to recognise that it's not everyone's ideal job, but it can be very rewarding.