

BARDSEY CASTLE

A tourist's guide to interesting archaeological sites in West Yorkshire



History

There are no surviving written records relating to Bardsey Castle so that it is difficult to be certain who built it and how long the structure was in use. The most likely suggestion is that the castle was built by Adam de Bruce in the late 1100s. He acquired the manor of Bardsey cum Rigton in 1175 in part compensation for the loss of his lands in Danby (North Yorkshire). He regained his former estates in 1201 and the manor reverted back to the Crown. It was later given to the monks of Kirkstall Abbey. Clearly the monks would have no need to build a castle so it seems likely that Adam built the castle while he was lord of the manor. This is borne out by pottery found during excavations on the site during the 1930s which found pottery with a date range of 1175-1200.

The Remains

The earthworks of the castle are rather unusual. Instead of being circular the motte is an elongated platform 1-2m high. This is cut across the centre by a ditch which divides the site into two parts. The motte itself is c. 100m long by

20m wide. Excavations around 1900 and again in 1930 revealed the foundations of a substantial stone tower on the eastern half of the motte.

The motte is surrounded by a flat oval bailey the scarped edge of which would have been surmounted by a wall or a timber palisade in the medieval period. Outside this was a 20m berm which was surrounded by another ditch.

This guide was written by Dave Weldrake (© WYAAS 2011)

External links Pastscape features detailed information on the site from English Heritage.

Bardsey cum Rigton Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan contains a history of the settlement together with photos and maps.

How to get there Bardsey Castle is situated at SE 3660 4333 Immediately to the north of the village. Click here for map.

Access The site is on private land and there is no public access. However, the earthworks can be seen clearly from a public footpath which runs along the southern side of the site.

NB: *There is more information about Bardsey Castle and other historic sites in West Yorkshire held within the West Yorkshire Historic Environment Record (HER), Contact us via 01924 306797 or wyher@wyjs.org.uk. Alternatively search our records online via the Heritage Gateway website - www.heritagegateway.org.uk*