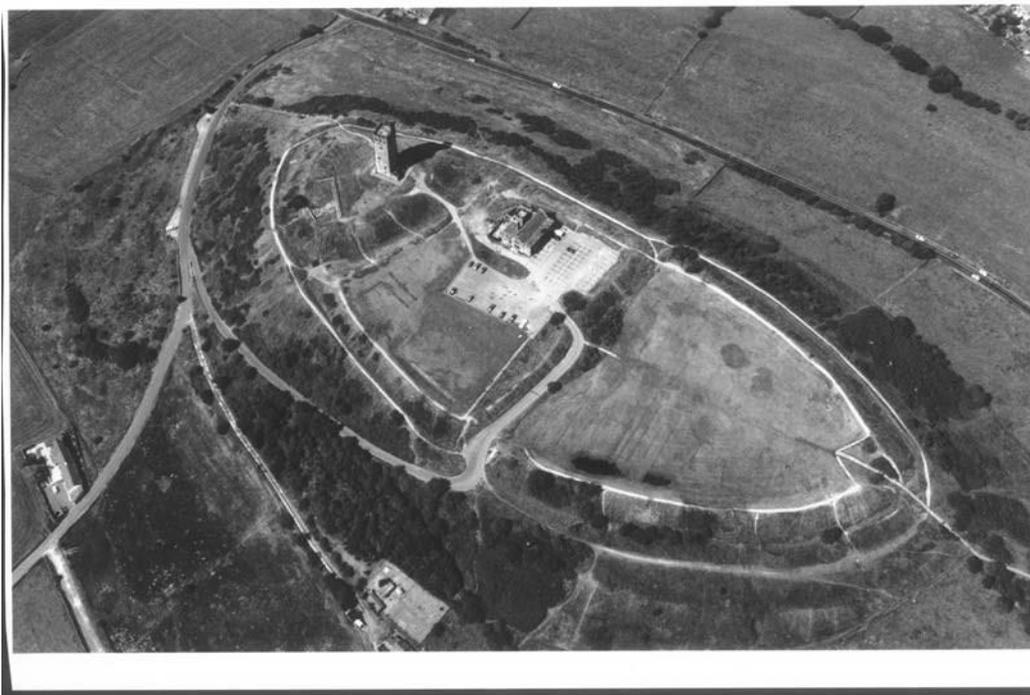


CASTLE HILL, ALMONDBURY

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



[This aerial photograph of Castle Hill clearly demonstrates the defensive potential of the hilltop. The image was taken in the 1990s and the building in the centre of the photograph has since been demolished.]

Description of the site

Castle Hill, Almondbury, is a prominent flat-topped hill which overlooks Huddersfield and its surrounding district. The distinctive outline of the Victoria Tower, erected on the top of Castle Hill to commemorate the monarch's Diamond Jubilee, is also a prominent landmark.

However, Castle Hill's origins lie, not with the Victorians, or with the de Lacey's who built a castle there in the 12th century, but far back in prehistory. The occupation of the site probably began in Neolithic times with a small enclosure on the hilltop but what can be seen on the site today are the ramparts of a massive Iron Age hillfort which gives the hilltop its characteristic shape. The inner rampart was revetted in stone though this has been obscured by the reworking of the defences in the 12th century. The inner rampart is surrounded by a single deep defensive ditch with a further outer rampart. In places where the defensive works are at their most vulnerable, such as the single entrance to the site on the northern side of the site, they have been reinforced with further embankments. Just how much of this material was physically dug out of the ground is now difficult to judge, but a recent survey by English Heritage has suggested that the fortification of the hilltop may have taken advantage of natural geological structures to minimise the amount of excavation needed.

Dating evidence

Although the hilltop was excavated by W. J. Varley at several times in the 20th century a formal site report was never produced. From other articles he wrote it is clear that Varley envisaged a series of occupation phases from the Neolithic onwards. These include an Iron Age enclosure with a single ditch and bank occupying only part of the hilltop which was later expanded to encircle the whole hill. Radiocarbon dates were obtained from material within the ramparts which suggest that the smaller enclosure was constructed in the mid 6th century BC and that the programme of expansion took place in the late 6th or early 5th century BC. There is no evidence of occupation on the site from the 4th century BC to its reoccupation in the 12th century AD. It would therefore seem that the idea put forward by some historians that Castle Hill could have been the residence of Cartimandua, queen of the Brigantes at the time of the Roman Conquest of the north of Britain, is incorrect.

Access

It is possible to take a car to the top of Castle Hill but this involves going up a steep, narrow winding road off Lumb Lane. Visitors may therefore prefer to park in the lay-by on Lumb Lane itself and walk up the steps.

The site is now managed as a public amenity by Kirklees MDC and information panels have been sited at a number of points along the circuit of the ramparts. Details of the opening times for the Victoria Tower and events on Castle Hill can be found on the [Kirklees Website](#)

This guide was written by Dave Weldrake (© WYAAS 2010)

More information on the WYAAS website

[Cartimandua](#)

[Iron Age Research Agenda](#)

[The medieval castle](#)

External links

[Pastscape](#) features detailed information on the site from English Heritage.

Old photographs of the site can be found by searching the [Kirklees Image Bank](#).

Castle Hill is also a regionally important geological site. More information on this can be gained from the [West Yorkshire Geology Trust](#)

Location

Castle Hill is situated to the south west of Almondbury village at SE 1525 1407. For map [click here](#).

NB: There is more information about Castle Hill, Almondbury 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