

## KIPPAX CASTLE

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



*The circular earthwork of Kippax Castle is now fringed by modern housing.*

### **History**

Kippax was an important manorial centre prior to the Norman Conquest. It comprised, not only Kippax itself, but also the townships of Ledston and Barwick in Elmet, as well as parcels of land in other townships in the locality. Kippax may have been the site of an Anglo-Saxon Minster or mother church which would be responsible for the spreading of Christianity through the region via a network of 'daughter houses'.

After the Conquest William gave Kippax to Ilbert de Lacy as part of a vast manorial holding called the honour of Pontefract. The importance of Kippax in pre-Conquest times led the de Lacys to establish the castle at Kippax to act as the administrative centre for that part of the honour. It continued to perform this function until the late 12<sup>th</sup> century when the role was transferred to [Barwick in Elmet](#).

The castle must have been dismantled at this time or soon after. Later medieval documentary sources demonstrate that the site had been turned over to domestic rather than military purposes. In 1322 the herbage of the *capital messuage* (the site of the castle) was being sold for 6d. This implies that the site had been put back to grass and had lost its defensive capability entirely.

### **The Remains**

The most visible survival of the castle today is a circular earthwork known locally as “Cheney Basin”. This is all that remains of the shell keep established on the site. There are antiquarian reports of stonework being visible under the embankments but a recent geophysical survey failed to identify any such remains. It therefore seems likely that the keep was originally a wooden structure and was never rebuilt in stone. There is a raised rectangular platform against the northern end of the earthwork but this is probably part of a later building mentioned in 17<sup>th</sup> century documents.

The bailey was situated to the east of the keep in the area now occupied by St Mary’s churchyard. Its outline has consequently been obscured by this later work but a slight bank can be seen running parallel to Robinson Lane. This may represent the embankment of the outer perimeter.

There is an interpretation board on the site.

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

### **More information on the WYAAS website**

[Some aspects of the archaeology of Kippax](#)

### **External link**

[Pastscape](#) offers more information on Kippax Castle from English Heritage.

### **Location**

Kippax Castle is situated on Manor Garth Hill in the centre of the town at SE 416 303. To see a map [click here](#).

### **Access**

The ringwork is now grassed over and maintained as a public amenity. There is an interpretation board giving details of the history of the site.

***NB:*** *There is more information about Kippax 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](mailto:wyher@wyjs.org.uk). Alternatively search our records online via the Heritage Gateway website - [www.heritagegateway.org.uk](http://www.heritagegateway.org.uk)*