

LOWE HILL, THORNES PARK, WAKEFIELD

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



Ridge and furrow on the slopes of Lowe Hill. The motte itself is hidden by the trees at the rear of the photograph.

History

Little is known about the history of Lowe Hill. It is likely that it was built at some time in the mid 1100s during the civil war between King Stephen and the Empress Matilda. It certainly was in existence at the same time as the castle at [Sandal](#) across the River Calder as there is documentary evidence of Edward II giving the two castles to Richard de Moseley in 1324. Some historians believe that the castle may have been abandoned soon afterwards. The Tudor antiquarian, John Leland records a tradition that one of the Earls of Warenne tried to build a castle on Lowe Hill but that the work was constantly being blown down. Modern historians have taken this to be a garbled reference to the great gale of 1330 which damaged Wakefield Bridge. Leland himself says only that the story is “like a fable”.

The Remains

Lowe Hill consists of a motte with two baileys on a prominent hill top to the north of the River Calder. However, the earthworks are obscured by trees and undergrowth and some of the features can be difficult to define. What is

sometimes taken to be a third bailey on the east of the site is in fact the platform for a Victorian bandstand.

Some trial trenching of the site was carried out in the 1950s during which a number of fragments of 12th century pottery were found. The close date range for these fragments led the excavators to conclude that the site had only been occupied for a relatively short time and it was suggested that the site may have been a siege work for Sandal Castle. No trace of stone work was found.

There are extensive areas of ridge and furrow on the slopes of Lowe Hill.

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

External Link	Pastscape features detailed information on the site from English Heritage.
Location	In the centre of Thornes Park to the south-west of Wakefield city centre Grid Reference: SE 2370 1973 For map click here .
Access	Lowe Hill is situated in the middle of a large public park. There is a level path around the perimeter of the site. However, the motte and parts of the bailey are overgrown with trees and brambles. This makes access to the interior of the site difficult.

NB: *There is more information about Lowe Hill 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*