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SUTTON VALENCE CASTLE.

BY HAROLD SANDS.

TOWN SUTTON, to give it the name by which it was at first distinguished from the adjacent villages of Chart and East Sutton (for not until long afterwards, in the year 1265, was it first known as now by the name of Sutton Valence), appears to have been inhabited so far back as the Roman occupation of Britain; for in 1827 Mr. C. Roach-Smith found here the remains of a walled cemetery in a field called Bowhalls, or Bowhaws, which contained upwards of one hundred cinerary urns, with glass vessels, and other pottery, now in the Charles Museum at Maidstone;* and again in 1841 foundations of a possible Roman watch-tower were laid bare by the same gentleman.† From the fact of there being here a farm known by the name of "The Harbour" I should infer‡ the existence of a Roman villa, which would be upon or near the line of Roman road supposed to have traversed the parish, from Maidstone to Headcorn, and possibly onwards to Newenden,§ and what was at that time the sea-coast.

There is no mention of any castle at Sutton Valence, or rather Town Sutton, at the time of Domesday Survey in 1086, nor do any of the monastic historians mention the place. It is, however, stated by Henry Godwin, F.S.A.,|| that "the ruins here are of a castle supposed to have been destroyed¶ *temp.* Stephen, 1135—1154." This is very probable, for we know from Henry of Huntingdon** that Stephen besieged and took Leeds Castle early in 1139, and it does not seem likely that while attacking a large fortress like Leeds he would leave a small stronghold in the hands of a rebellious baron, and so expose all his siege operations

* *Archæologia* (Royal Society of Antiquaries), vol. xxix., pp. 421—423.

† *Sutton Valence and East Sutton* (Rev. J. Cave-Browne).

‡ *Archæologia Cantiana*, Vol. XV., pp. 74 and 88.

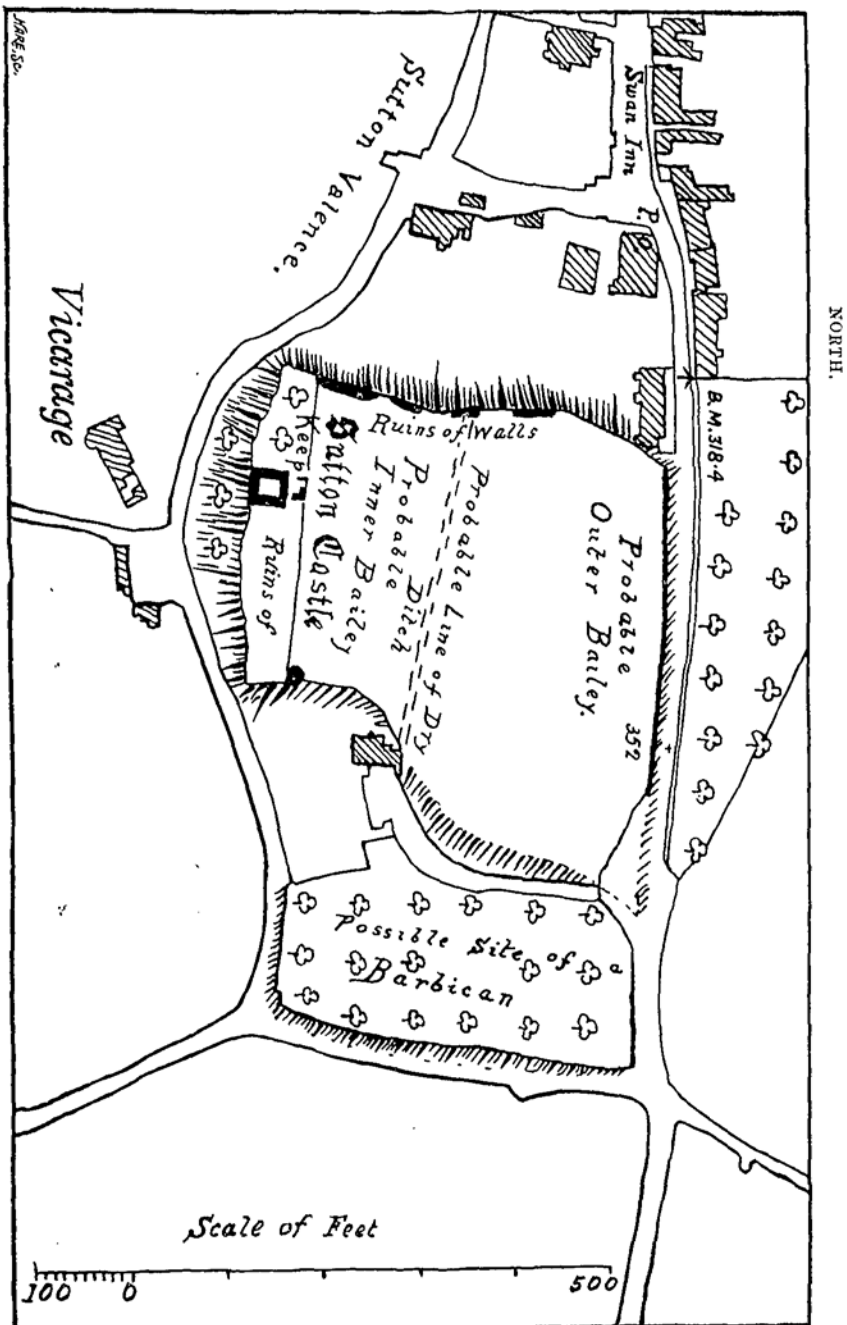
§ See *Words and Places* (Isaac Taylor), new edition, p. 171.

|| Godwin, *English Archæologist's Handbook*, p. 224.

¶ Walls breached, keep rendered temporarily untenable. See p. 203.

** Henry of Huntingdon's *Chronicle* (ed. Bohn), p. 270.

SUTTON VALENCE CASTLE.



PLAN OF THE SITE, BASED UPON THE $\frac{1}{25}$ ORDNANCE SURVEY.

By H. SANDS, 1901.

to the risk of failure by an attack "*en revers*." Mr. G. T. Clark* thinks "the keep of Sutton Castle may be Norman," but he has not ventured to include it in his lists of rectangular or shell keeps.

The various Kentish historians say very little about Sutton Castle, which does not (though possessed by many noble families) appear to have ever played a prominent part in history. Kilburne states that an anchor was found not far below the Castle some time before he wrote his history in 1659, and hazards a supposition that the sea formerly came up this valley, which being at Headcorn over fifty feet above sea-level renders this an obvious impossibility.

We know that the hook was a favourite weapon in mediæval warfare,† or it may have been an anchor belonging to a mooring, either for pulling forwards on rollers a movable siege tower, or a projectile engine, such as a trebuchet or pierrier.‡

Probably the best and fullest account of the Castle is to be found in Hasted, who, writing in 1778, says:§ "On the brow of the hill, a little east of the village, stand the venerable ruins of Sutton Castle, now almost covered with ivy. What remains seems to have been the keep, or donjon of this fortress, two separate rooms of which are still in being, and by the cavities where the joists have been laid into the walls appear to have been at least a story higher than they are at present. The remains of the walls are more than 8 feet thick, and about 20 feet high, and have loopholes for arrows at proper distances; they are composed of the (local) quarry stone and flint mixed, together with some few thin bricks or paving tiles interspersed throughout. The whole appears to have been exceedingly strong, though of very rude workmanship, and seems to have 'been built in the time of the barons' wars.'" A view which accompanies this description shews two sides of a rectangular building faced with squared ashlar, and having apertures denoting the situation of loops, the whole very ruinous and much overgrown with ivy and trees.

Sir James Mackenzie says of Sutton Castle:|| "The fragment which now remains of the keep-wall appears to be First Pointed work of Henry III. (this would seem to confirm the correctness of Hasted's description). In the wall, at some height above the ground, are several curious cells contrived in the thickness of the wall, the use

* Clark's *Mediæval Military Architecture*, vol. i., pp. 70, 138, 146.

† See Henry of Huntingdon's *Chronicle*, p. 270.

‡ See Roger of Wendover, *Flowers of History* (ed. Bohn), p. 374.

§ Hasted's *History of Kent*, vol. ii., p. 414 (second edition).

|| *The Castles of England* (Sir James D. Mackenzie), vol. i., p. 46.

of which has not as yet been explained." Sir James Mackenzie does not seem to have been aware that such chambers in the wall on *all* stories are a common feature in all the existing rectangular Norman keeps.

After a careful examination of all the county histories I have not been able to trace the source from which Sir James Mackenzie derived his information, nor at the present time are there any details in the ruins that remain sufficient to warrant so decided a statement as to the date to which they are assigned. The opinion advanced by Clark, though deserving of all the respect with which any statement emanating from such an authority should be received, is merely conjectural, for the late Mr. Clark never visited or made a personal inspection of Sutton Valence Castle, nor is there any description of it in his well-known work (save the reference I have already given), so that his opinion is based upon what is at the best but hearsay evidence.

The descriptions of Hasted and Mackenzie are fairly correct. What remains of the Castle at the present day is the lower and part of the upper story of a rectangular tower, much overgrown with that noxious weed the ivy, externally about 38 feet square, and internally 22 feet square, with the walls about 8 feet thick,* and now about 30 feet high. The holes, about 15 inches square for the rectangular beams carrying the floor, can be plainly seen in the south wall. The ground-floor appears to have been lighted by three loops, and to have had at the north-east corner a small cell with a barrel-vaulted roof in the thickness of the wall. In the south wall, which is the most perfect, is a short passage leading from what has been either a wide loop or a small window-arch on the first floor, above the ground-level; it is about 3 feet wide, and terminates in a mural chamber in the thickness of the wall at the south-west corner. This is some 5 feet square and about 9 feet high, the roof barrel-vaulted; it is lighted by a loop. It may have been a garderobe. A similar cell appears to have existed in the south-east corner, reached by a similar passage from the window-arch or loop in the east face. The other walls are much more ruinous: the north one (outside which are scanty remains of what may have been the fore-building) is broken down irregularly to about seven feet above the present ground-level. The keep occupies a position about the centre of the south face, at the very

* No trace now remains of the ashlar facing shewn in Hasted's view, which would have increased these dimensions.

SUTTON VALENCE CASTLE.



INTERIOR FROM NORTH-WEST CORNER, SHEWING PRESENT GROUND LEVEL
AND BEAM HOLES.

From a Photograph by H. SANDS, 1901.

edge and extremity of the steeply-scarped promontory on which the Castle stood; traces of the curtain-wall may still be seen here and there on the western side, and of a tower on the eastern face. The site was, as may be seen from walking over the ground, and from examination of the 25-inch scale Ordnance Map, naturally a strong one, and weak only upon the northern front. Where so little remains it is necessary to work by conjecture and comparison with other examples. Hazarding a guess, I should infer that the Castle occupied the entire spur of the hill, forming an irregular rectangle, with steeply-scarped sides to the east, west, and south, and on the north probably intersected by a deep dry moat running across the narrow neck from about the old parsonage-house on the east side; this would give for the inner bailey an area of about 320 feet east to west, by 210 feet north to south. If, as is possible, there was an outer bailey, it may very well have extended as far northwards as the main road leading to East Sutton (which would include the entire area now occupied by the hop-gardens, in which stand the remains of the keep); this would give an outer bailey of about 460 feet from east to west, and 260 feet north to south.

The masonry of the keep has a great resemblance to that in the north dungeon tower at Saltwood Castle, and these two towers are much alike except in size, the Saltwood tower (also in the inner bailey) being externally only 27 feet square, and internally about 15 feet square, with walls 8 feet thick. The areas occupied by the inner and outer baileys at Saltwood* also resemble those which I have conjecturally assigned, after examination of the ground and the map, to Sutton Valence Castle. They were as follows: Saltwood, inner bailey, 320 feet east to west, by 200 feet north to south; the outer bailey, 450 feet long, by 230 feet at its widest part. The masonry of the keep of Sutton Valence is very rude; it is composed of rough undressed blocks of free-stone, and flints of all sizes, and some attempt has been made at laying the stones in courses. No traces now remain of any hewn ashlar facing of dressed stone, as shewn in Hasted's view; the joints are wide, and with good hard mortar. The masonry has a strong general resemblance to that in the great keep at Canterbury, to the outer walls of Hastings Castle, and to Peak Castle in Derbyshire, and in a lesser degree to that of Gundulph's Tower at West Malling; but looking at the absence of any architectural detail to which a definite date can be assigned with absolute certainty, I should hesitate to

* *Saltwood Castle*, by F. Beeston, pp. 10—20.

assign to it so early a date as 1070, and am rather disposed to assign its construction to the reign of Henry II., falling within the period 1154—1176.* It must be borne in mind that this keep of Sutton Valence is larger than many well-known examples of undoubted rectangular Norman keeps, notably that of Malling, already mentioned, Goodrich, Wattlesborough, Clitheroe, Castle Combe, Duddo, and Peak Castle, near Castleton in Derbyshire, the date of the erection of this last being known from the Great Roll of the Pipe to be 22 Henry II., or 1176, and its resemblance generally gives some warrant for the date I have conjecturally assigned to Sutton Valence, which is fully entitled to rank with and be considered as a keep proper, as opposed to a mere wall-tower. Upon the well-known rule for height of one and a half to twice the length of the short side, it would have been from 60 to 70 feet high without its high pitched roof,† and must have formed a prominent object in the landscape and commanded a most extensive view over the surrounding country.

Standing as it does so high, and commanding a fine view southwards, the site occupied by Sutton Castle at the end of a projecting spur of the range known as the Quarry Hills, here about 400 feet above sea-level, was naturally strong, and required but little aid from the military engineer to make it an admirable position either for attack or defence. From the fact that Sutton Castle is not included in the list of known licences to crenellate‡ between the years 1256—1478, we may infer that it was already in existence, and so of an earlier date and type.

Commanding as it did the road running from Maidstone through the Weald to Rye and Old Winchelsea (which at the time of the Barons' Wars had become the resort of Earl Simon's most devoted adherents amongst the portsmen),§ Sutton Castle occupied a position of considerable strategic importance, and may probably be added to the list of Kentish Castles in the hands of the Baron's party. There being no mound, natural or artificial, the keep would probably take the form of a small and strong rectangular tower, possibly resembling that at West Malling, with floors (as we see by the beam-holes still remaining) of timber, and with a high-

* There may have been an earlier castle on the same site *temp.* Stephen.

† The authority for this may be found in an early MS. in Bib. Reg. 13, a. iii., in the British Museum Library, in which Colchester Keep is shewn with a sharply-pointed roof of lofty pitch; also in Viollet-le-Duc, *Dict. Arch.*, vol. v., article "Donjon," pp. 84—96.

‡ Godwin, *English Archaeologist's Handbook*, pp. 233—251.

§ *The Cinque Ports* (Montagu Burrows), p. 110.

SUTTON VALENCE CASTLE.



INTERIOR OF KEEP FROM NORTH-EAST CORNER, SHEWING ENTRANCE TO WALL CHAMBER.

From a Photograph by H. SANDS, 1901.

pitched timber roof;* this form of construction, exposing the keep to the risk of its destruction by fire in any attack, led in the case of several of the larger rectangular keeps to the later insertion of stone vaulting in at least one floor, which formed no part of the original design. There is an account of the burning by the French of the castles of Tillières and Montacute in Normandy (both having similar keeps) in Professor Freeman's *History of the Norman Conquest*,† and of their speedy restoration by replacing the burnt floors and roofs.

Where Norman keeps have been built on old sites formerly occupied by Roman buildings, we frequently find the old materials, such as Roman bricks and tiles, worked up in the walls (as here mentioned by Hasted), together with herringbone work and other styles of early masonry. The early Norman keeps usually stood in an enclosure surrounded by a plain curtain-wall (having a ditch wet or dry without), generally about 20 to 30 feet high, having battlements, but without projecting towers flanking the curtains, as at Eynesford Castle. Often in the Kentish castles the keep occupied a weak corner of the enclosed space, as at Canterbury, Dover, Eynesford, and Rochester, but here it was not so.

The masonry of Norman curtain-walls was usually greatly inferior to that of the keeps, and where not actually removed the walls have generally fallen rapidly to decay, as at Canterbury. The curtain usually included a considerable space known as the "Bailey," in which stood buildings, serving as lodgings for the garrison, domestic offices, the lord's house, and the chapel; for it must be remembered that the keep was never meant for actual residence,‡ save during the stress of siege, and then only as a last resort, when it would be held by the baron's armed tenants, on whose fidelity he would place more reliance than on that of his mercenary soldiers.§

Thomas Philipott, who published his *Villare Cantianum*|| shortly before the *Topographie* of Richard Kilburne of Hawkhurst (although both works appeared in the same year, 1659), says that "Sutton Valence contracted that name from William de Valence,

* Viollet Le Duc, *Dictionnaire de l'Architecture*, vol. v., p. 37 *et seq.*

† *History of the Norman Conquest* (E. A. Freeman), vol. ii., chap. viii., pp. 204 and 232.

‡ *Mediæval Military Architecture* (G. T. Clark), vol. i., p. 136.

§ Such at least is the theory propounded by Mr. G. T. Clark, in support of which he adduces little or no evidence.

|| *Villare Cantianum* (Thomas Philipott), in the second edition of 1776, p. 333.

Earl of Pembroke, being lord of the fee (in 1265), who certainly instituted that castle, which even now (1659) in its relics, and fragments with much of venerable magnificence, overlooks the plain." Harris, who published his *History of Kent* in 1719, simply copied Philipott, and in none of them is there any mention of the precise date when the Castle was dismantled and allowed to fall to ruins; we may, however, safely conclude that this must have been done before 1648,* for had any use been made of the Castle at the time of the Cromwellian revolution, some mention of the fact and of its reduction would certainly have been made by contemporary historians. It had most probably become decayed at the time of the inquisition on the Castles of England *temp.* Edward III.,† taken with a view of putting them in a state of defence; but this is a matter which I have not yet had an opportunity to examine, though I hope to do so later on. If Sutton Castle was built by William de Valence, it must have been at a very early period of his ownership. His son and heir, Aymer de Valence, rebuilt Bampton Castle in Oxfordshire; the licence to crenellate it is dated 8 Edward II., or 1315, and at that time Sutton Valence Castle could not have been altered, much less rebuilt, without such a licence.‡

We now come to that portion of the history of the Castle connected with the descent of the manor, which (although a lengthy subject) I have endeavoured to render as brief as is possible without omitting some of the multifarious changes of ownership. The recorded information relative to the manor is much fuller and more explicit than that concerning what I may term the architectural history of the Castle, which will probably only be fully revealed when recourse is had to the sole reliable method of obtaining such information, the diligent use of the spade.

Before the Norman Conquest the manors of Town and East Sutton were held by Leofwin, brother of King Harold. After Hastings they were bestowed (together with Chart Sutton and many others) by William upon his half-brother Odo, whom he made Earl of Kent. By rebellion against his nephew William Rufus, Odo forfeited all his possessions in England in 1088, and during a period of about a hundred years the manors appear to have remained in the hands of the Crown. From this point onwards needless repetition will be saved in speaking of these three

* Kilburne says: "When or by whom this castle was ruined I finde not" (*Topographie*, p. 259).

† *English Archaeologist's Handbook* (Godwin), p. 181.

‡ *Domestic Architecture* (Turner and Parker), vol. ii., p. 260.

manors of Chart, Town, and East Sutton, by referring to them compendiously as "the Sutton Manors." In 1 John, 1199, we find them in the possession of Baldwin de Bethune, Earl of Albemarle, *jure uxoris* Hawisia, daughter and sole heiress of William le Gros, Earl of Albemarle. In 5 John, 1203, we find Baldwin settling in frank marriage the Sutton Manors, and those of Brabourne and Kemsing in Kent, with many in other counties, on his daughter Alicia upon her marriage with William Mareschal the younger, afterwards Earl Mareschal and of Pembroke; she dying childless in 1225, William married Eleanor, second daughter of King John, without the consent of her brother King Henry III., who has left on record his indignation thereat in the Patent Rolls.* The Sutton Manors were then settled upon Eleanor for her life, but William dying childless in 1231, Eleanor, after making a solemn vow of perpetual widowhood, married (again without the King's consent) in 1238 Simon de Montfort, Earl of Leicester. She, after his death at the battle of Evesham in 1265, was (with all her family) banished the realm, and the Sutton Manors being confiscated by the Crown were conferred by King Henry III. upon his half-brother, William de Valence. Thus from this date Town Sutton has been known by the name of its then possessor, as Sutton Valence. William de Valence had by his marriage in 1247 with the great Kentish heiress, Joan, daughter of Warine de Montchensy by his wife Joan, sister of William, Earl of Pembroke, already been created Earl of Pembroke. He died in 1296, and was succeeded by his son Aymer de Valence, Earl of Pembroke.

There was formerly a market and fair of one day held at Sutton Valence upon St. Edmund's Day, November 20, said to have been granted by Henry III. in 1231, and, according to Seymour,† still observed in 1782; it has, however, I believe, long since expired of inanition. Aymer having been murdered in France in 1324, and dying without children, his estates (according to an inquisition taken after his death, situated in six hundred and thirty-one different places)‡ passed to John de Hastings, Baron of Bergavenny, by his marriage with Isabel, the elder sister of Aymer de Valence; the title, however, did not pass until 1347, *temp.* Edward III., when his grandson, Laurence de Hastings, was then created Earl of Pembroke. By the death of his grandson Earl John in 1390 without issue, the Sutton Manors passed to Reginald Lord Grey de

* Calendar Patent Rolls, 10 Henry III.

† *A Survey of Kent* (Charles Seymour), p. 761.

‡ *The Earls and Earldom of Pembroke* (G. T. Clark), p. 110.

Ruthin, he being the next of kin to Aymer de Valence, and as such at the coronation of King Henry IV. he carried the great gold spurs;* after which, being taken prisoner in Wales by Owen Glendower, he was obliged to pay a ransom of ten thousand marks. To raise this King Henry IV. in 1417 granted a licence to Robert Braybrooke, Bishop of London, and others, feoffees of several of Reginald de Grey's lordships, to sell (among others) the Sutton Manors towards the raising of his ransom. It appears to have resulted in the sale of Chart and Sutton Valence to the family of St. Leger (East Sutton passing into other hands, until in 8 James I., 1611, it came into the possession of the family of Filmer), for in 5 Henry V., 1418, Juliana, widow of Thomas St. Leger of Otterden, died possessed of them. Soon afterwards we find them the property of William Clifford of Bobbing Court, near Faversham, Sheriff of Kent in 4 and 13 Henry VI., 1426 and 1435; he died in 1438. They continued in the Clifford family until the marriage of Mildred Clifford with Sir George Harpur of Derbyshire in 2 Edward VI., 1549. By her son Sir Edward Harpur they were alienated to Sir Edward Hales, Bart.,† who died possessed of them in 1654. They were sold in 1670 by the trustees of his grandson to Sir William Drake of Amersham, Bucks, and in 1708 were purchased from the trustees of his grandson Montague Drake by Sir Christopher Desbouverie, who in 1720 became owner (by further purchases of the Drake jointure estate) of the entire fee-simple of Chart Sutton and Sutton Valence. He died in 1733, when Sutton Valence then passed to his youngest daughter Elizabeth Bouverie of Teston, an Act having been passed in 10 George II., 1737, to enable the family to use the surname of Bouverie only. From her the property appears to have come into the hands of the Dean and Chapter of Rochester, and about 1873 it was sold by the Ecclesiastical Commissioners to the late Sir Edmund Filmer, Baronet, himself descended from the celebrated Sir Robert Filmer of East Sutton, the author of the *Patriarcha* (which was published in 1680, twenty-seven years after his death) and many other learned works. After the vicissitudes of so many years it remains vested in the present representative of this family.

* It is interesting to notice, as a survival to the present day of a feudal duty, that in the Court of Claims for Services to be performed at the Coronation, held July 18, 1901, claims were made, both by Lords Grey de Ruthyn and Hastings, to carry the great gold spurs, and by the Earl of Loudon, as an immediate descendant of the Marchioness of Hastings, who died in 1868, to carry the golden spurs at the Coronation of King Edward VII.

† Of Tunstall. See *Archæologia Cantiana*, Vol. XIV., pp. 61—84, for the Hales pedigree.