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[Home](#) | [Main Menu](#) | [Castle Index](#) | [Historical Essays](#) | [Related Essays](#) | [What's New](#) | [Links](#)

Hay Castle



in the town of Hay-on-Wye, Powys, mid Wales
SO 229 423



[Map link for Hay Castle](#)



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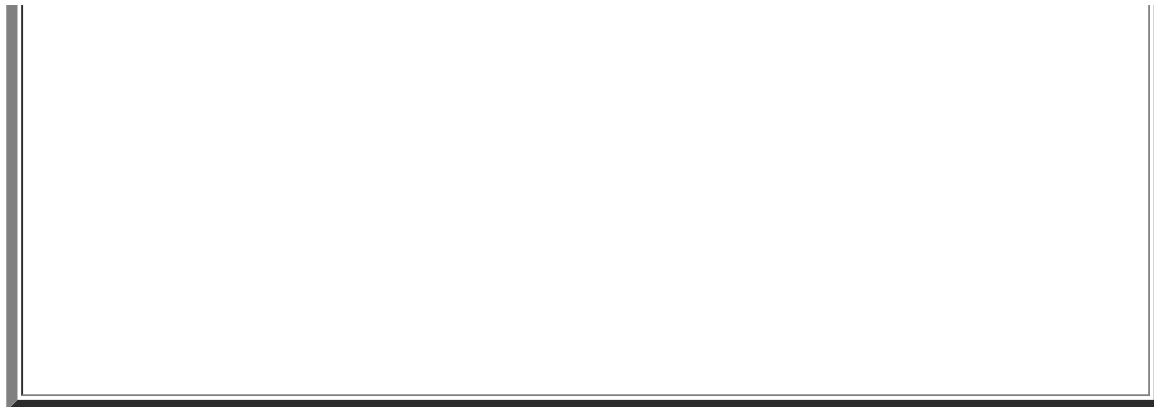


Mike Salter 1991

[The motte](#) rising 3m to a summit 20m across near the parish church SW of the town is probably the site of the 'castello de haia' which is mentioned in 1121. It was probably built by William Revel, one of Bernard de Newmarch's knights. Later in the 12th century a more commanding site to the NE was utilised for a large oval ringwork 85m by 70m. Matilda de Braose is said to have built the stone keep in c1200, but it is perhaps more likely that she added the gateway arch to a tower built in the 1180s. She died of starvation at the command of King John, who burnt the castle and town of Hay in 1216 while attempting to suppress the rebellion of Giles and Reginald de Braose. They were burnt again by [Llywelyn Fawr](#) in 1231 and had to be rebuilt by Henry III. In 1232 and 1237 he granted the townsfolk of Hay the right to collect a special toll to pay for walling in the town with stone. The castle was captured by Prince Edward in 1264 and by Simon de Montfort's forces in 1265.

Both town and castle suffered damage by [Owain Glyndwr's](#) forces in 1400, but the castle was listed as defensible against the Welsh in 1403. The castle had passed to the Earls of Stafford, later Dukes of Buckingham, and is said to have suffered further damage during the conflicts of the 1460s. The last Duke, executed by Henry VIII in 1521, remodelled the keep. Whatever apartments then adjoined it were





The keep measures 10m from the north to south by 8.3m wide. There is a small cellar only a third of the size of the three storeys of rooms above it. Access to it must have been from a hatch and ladder. The lowest habitable room has the remains of a late Norman window of two lights facing the court, and above it is a better preserved specimen, lacking only the mullion between two round arched lights set in an outer round arch. No other original features now survive and there is no stair, there being little room for such a feature within the thin walls. At some time the northern corners were provided with heavy buttressing and in c1500 the north wall was given wooden lintelled fireplaces, serving the lower two habitable rooms with on either side two light windows with wooden lintelled embrasures. In an earlier rebuilding, probably after some damage caused by the Welsh in 1231, the whole SE corner was replaced and buttressed, and a new doorway made alongside it facing east. At the same time the outer arch of the gateway was added, providing the slot for a portcullis worked from a small chamber at the height of the wall-walk about 7m above the court. The wall-walk, portcullis room, and keep doorway are reached by a stair beside the keep SE corner, which turns to rise over the back of the gateway. The 12m long section of curtain east of the gateway is all that remains of the wall around the courtyard, which was about 75m from east to west, by 65m wide. The wall is 1.8m thick at the top but is more like 3m thick at the base where it has a high plinth of complex form.

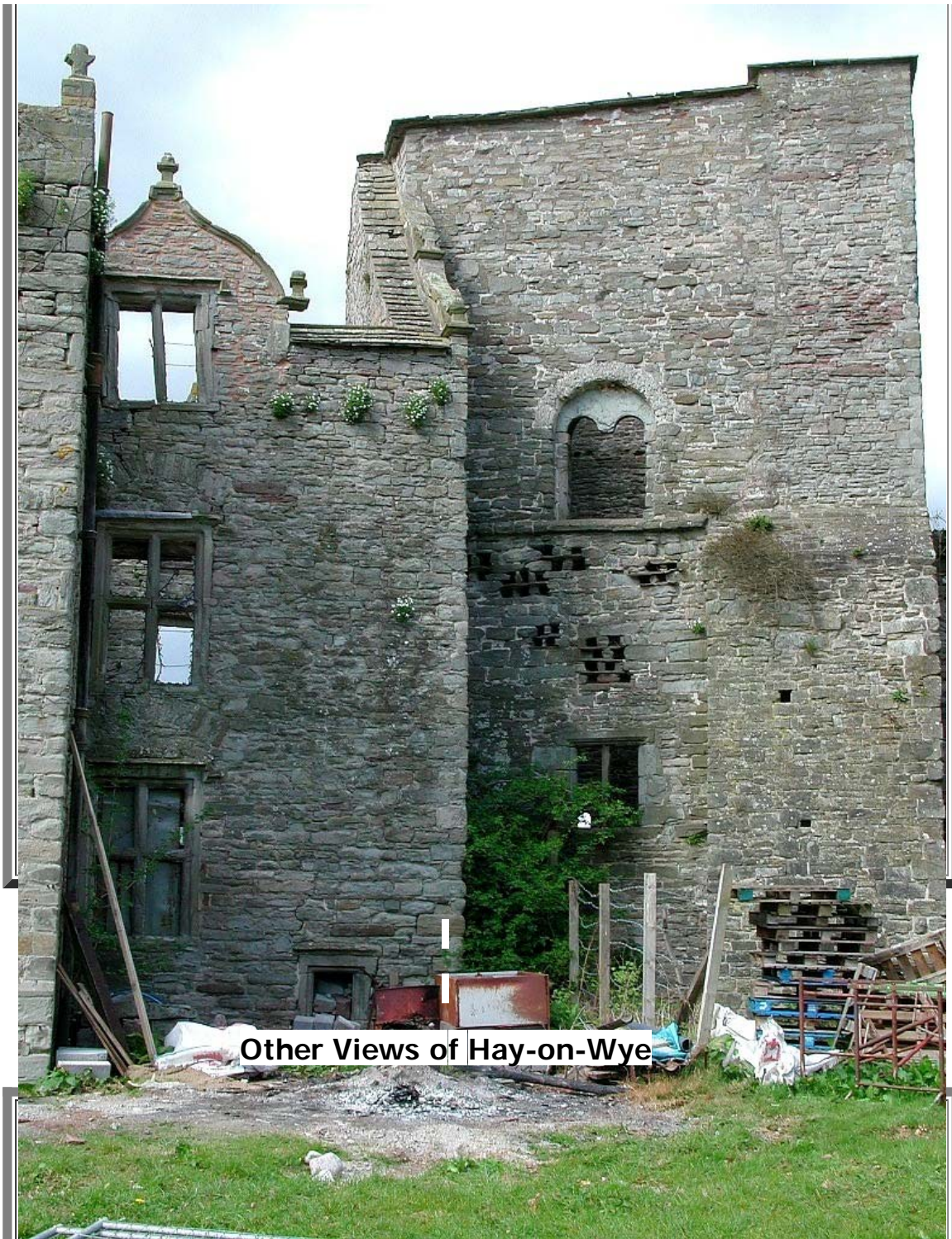
The town walls enclose a D-shaped area with the straight side facing the Wye. The castle lay on the south side with the West Gate nearby. To the east was the Black Lion Gate, and to the north the Water Gate, all removed in the late 18th century. The last sections of wall on the west were removed for the railway in the 1860s.

Below: the rear of the castle showing both medieval and post

medieval detailing.



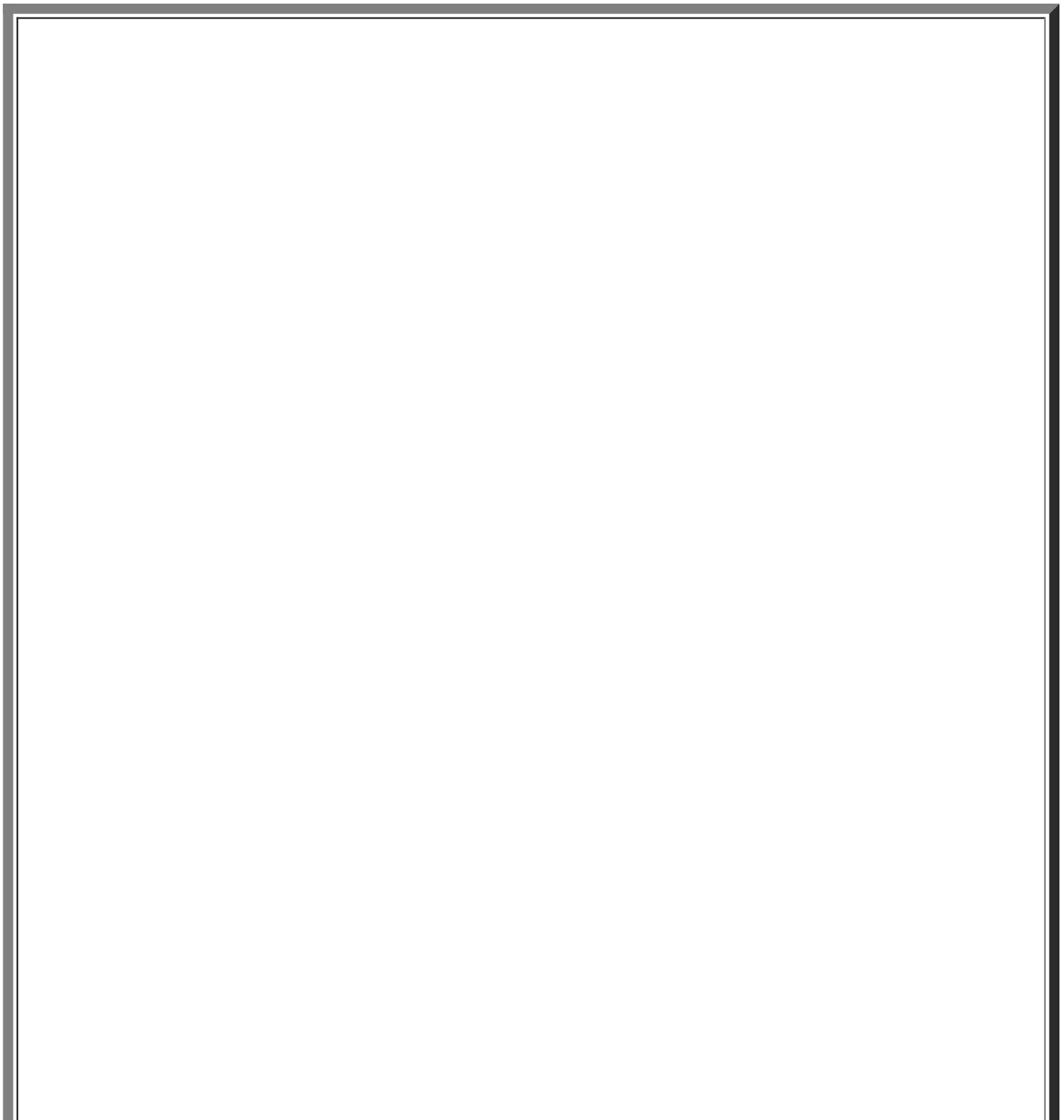




Other Views of Hay-on-Wye











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