

West Sussex County Council Designation Full Report

11/06/2018

Scheduled Monument excluding Chichester District

DesigUID: DWS28 **Type:** Scheduled Monument **Status:** Active

Preferred Ref **NHLE UID** **Other Ref**

12886 1012180 1403

Name: KEEP OF TOTE COPSE CASTLE, 400M NORTH OF DECOY FARMHOUSE

Grade: **Date Assigned:** 28/02/1955 **Amended:** 09/07/1991 **Revoked:**

Legal Description

DESCRIPTION OF THE MONUMENT: The monument includes part of the buried remains of Tote Copse castle, the rest of which was seriously damaged (having been partially excavated) in 1962. The surviving mound measures 20m by 10m and stands some 2.4m high. It represents part of a large mound, or motte, of clay which had been raised around the base of a central building of the castle, the keep.

The foundations and walls of the western side of the keep within the mound comprise shaped blocks of Selsey limestone, with more carefully carved Caen stone for the slim buttresses which strengthened the wall. The eastern corner of the keep had been robbed of its stone during the Middle Ages and does not survive. In the cellar of the keep was a well 8.5m deep, and at the south-western corner was a little-used cess pit, both integral parts of the keep.

Historical evidence and artefacts from the excavation showed that the castle had been built in the first half of the 12th century by Seffrid de Escures, the Bishop of Chichester, at this site near his palace and at the hub of his Aldingbourne estate.

ASSESSMENT OF IMPORTANCE: Motte castles are medieval fortifications introduced into Britain by the Normans. They comprised a large conical mound of earth or rubble, the motte, surmounted by a palisade and a stone or timber tower. In a majority of examples an embanked enclosure containing additional buildings, the bailey, adjoining the motte. Motte castles and motte-and-bailey castles acted as garrison forts during offensive military operations, as strongholds, and, in many cases, as aristocratic residences and the centre of local or royal administration. Built in towns, villages and open countryside, motte castles generally occupied strategic positions dominating their immediate locality and, as a result, are the most visually impressive monuments of the early post-Conquest period surviving in the modern landscape. Over 600 motte castles or motte-and-bailey castles are recorded nationally, with examples known from most regions. As such, and as one of a restricted range of recognised early post-Conquest monuments, they are particularly important for the study of Norman Britain and the development of the feudal system. Although many were occupied for only a short period of time, motte castles continued to be built and occupied from the 11th to the 13th centuries, after which they were superseded by other types of castle.

At Tote Copse castle, although only the foundations and lower walls of the keep of the castle and some of the motte survive, these features still retain significant archaeological potential, for example for the study of building techniques of the Norman period. The keep was at the centre of a well-documented castle site which had associations with the bishops of Chichester for several centuries.

Curatorial Notes

West Sussex County Number 168 Scheduled on 28 February 1955, replaced by SAM 12886 09 July 1991

Scheduling Amended 01/03/1968

Scheduling Amended 01/04/1974

Scheduling Revised 09/07/1991

Scheduled Monument at Risk (2008) - Overall Condition: Generally satisfactory but with significant localised problems;
Condition Trend: Stable; Risk: MEDIUM

Designating Organisation: English Heritage

Location

Grid Reference: Centred SU 9227 0477 (17m by 24m)

Map sheet: SU90SW **Area (Ha):** 0.02

Administrative Areas

Civil Parish Aldingbourne, Arun, West Sussex

Postal Addresses - None recorded

Sources

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Scheduling record: Secretary of State. 1991. Schedule of Monuments.

Associated Monuments

MWS3511 Monument: Tote Copse Castle

Additional Information

LegacyUID: 12886
