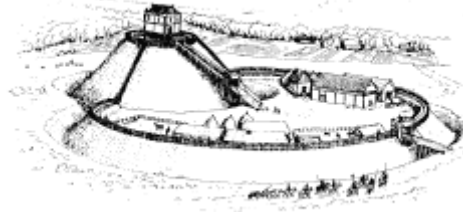


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A short guide to Hen Domen motte and bailey castle

by the Clwyd Powys Archaeological Trust

Hen Domen (OS national grid reference SO214981) is situated to the west of Montgomery town. What was once a timber castle is now a large earthen mound (c8 metres high and 40 metres in diameter) with the earthworks of the bailey. The site, which is now partially covered with trees, is the most extensively excavated timber castle in Britain. It was an important location just east of the ford of Rhyd Whyman over the river Severn. Hen Domen means "old mound".



Hen Domen was built in the 1070s (not long after the Norman conquest) by Roger, Earl of Shrewsbury who named it Montgomery after his home in Normandy. Roger of Montgomery was lord of large areas of land in Powys and an important noble in the new Norman world. The castle became the property of the crown in 1102 when Robert of Montgomery rebelled against the king. The castle was then held by the de Boulers until 1207. In 1215 the area came under Welsh control and the castle fell into decay although it was briefly reoccupied in 1223 when the area came back under English control and the new castle of Montgomery was built.

Today the site consists of a large motte or earthen mound on which the timber keep would have stood, and to the east a bailey, all of which were defended by double ramparts and ditches. The ramparts would have been topped by wooden palisades to protect the inhabitants from attackers and there were probably wooden towers placed at intervals along the bank. Within the bailey were wooden buildings. Some were dwellings but others, including a massive structure supported on twelve posts, may have been a granary.

Another substantial timber building set behind the bridge which led to the motte may have been a two-storied hall and residence for Roger of Montgomery. During the twelfth century the castle was modified with a new palisade being built and the layout of the bailey altered. Wooden buildings filled a large part of the bailey with many lying along the inside of the bank and palisade. As well as dwellings and workrooms there was a chapel, a granary and a water cistern.

The number of finds from the excavation is not great and they show that the Montgomeries and, later, the de Boulers who lived here had few comforts or luxuries. The impression gained from the excavation is very much of an important defensive post controlling an area of hard-won land. The inhabitants of Hen Domen lived an outdoor life, they ate beef, mutton, pork and deer with no imported delicacies and little native fruit. Very few coins have been found and nothing to indicate that the inhabitants were literate.

Access and parking

Access is gained from the B4385. The turning lies to the east of the road and the hamlet of Hen Domen is sign-posted along a small lane. The site is immediately adjacent to the lane on the north side and can be seen from the road. **HEN DOMEN IS ON PRIVATE LAND**

AND CAN ONLY BE VISITED WITH PERMISSION FROM THE OWNER. Please contact the Clwyd Powys Archaeological Trust for further information. *Ordnance Survey Landranger Map 137.*

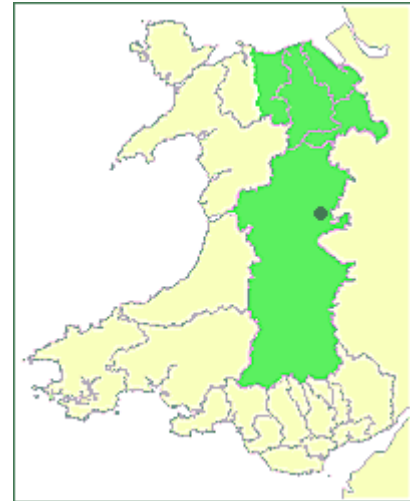
The above information comes from the Sites and Monuments Record of the Clwyd Powys Archaeological Trust. For further information about the historic environment of this area, contact:-

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