

PILSBURY CASTLE TRAIL - from Hartington

CENTURIES OF SETTLEMENT

a moderate walk of 4.5 miles with several stiles

Why was Pilsbury castle built in such a remote location? Who actually built and used it? What was its purpose and how long was it in existence? Pilsbury Castle has intrigued and baffled archaeologists and historians for many years.

We invite you to join us on a stroll through time. Explore the spectacular landscape between Hartington and Pilsbury. Discover how this mysterious castle fits into the ever changing landscape of the Upper Dove valley where people have lived and worked for thousands of years.

The walk starts by the duckpond, right in the centre of the ancient market place of Hartington (A).

A market charter was granted to the Norman Ferrers family, Earls of Derby, in 1203, and the rectangular shape of the medieval market place can still be traced. It runs downhill from the Church and former manor house towards the Charles Cotton Hotel which now juts out onto what was once a communal area.

Dig Street (or 'Ditch Street,') marks the 'ditch' that bordered the edge of one of Hartington's open fields. As you walk along Dig Street away from the village, you will notice the strips of medieval ridge and furrow (and the prominent headland) over the wall in the field on the left.



Ferrers seal

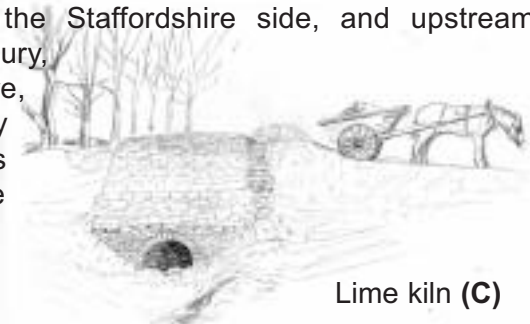


Key

- A** Old Market Place
- B** Moat Hall
- C** Lime kiln
- D** Motte
- E** Lead rake
- F** Grange boundary
- G** Romano-British sites
- H** Pilsbury Castle
- I** Hamlet of Pilsbury
- J** Marty Lane
- K** Ludwell

We now fork sharply right, off the tarmaced road, taking the cemented track that soon turns into a stony walled lane and climbs steeply until it meets Hide Lane. We turn left away from the village and follow Hide Lane for just over 200 metres to the footpath sign just past the farm on the left. Here we climb the stone stile and cross the fields, following clearly marked footpath signs and a series of stiles.

We see a well-preserved lime-kiln on the hillside above us, evidence of land improvement in the past. Across the river on the Staffordshire side, and upstream towards Pilsbury, in Derbyshire, we enjoy stunning views of the Dove Valley.



Lime kiln (C)

William Gould, Estate Manager for the Welbeck and Chatsworth estates, and also of Pilsbury Grange, has left a diary which includes day to day details of farming life in the industrious household of Pilsbury Grange from 1783-88.

Pilsbury ford, below the present day buildings, was a much used river crossing on a packhorse route. The route came all the way from Cheshire and can be followed on a modern day map coming via Congleton to Rushton Spencer and then along the shoulder of Gun Hill to Meerbrook and Upperhulme before climbing to the Mermaid Inn. The way then comes directly over the moors before crossing the River Manifold at Brund Mill, finally climbing over the shoulder of Sheen Hill and descending to Pilsbury ford.



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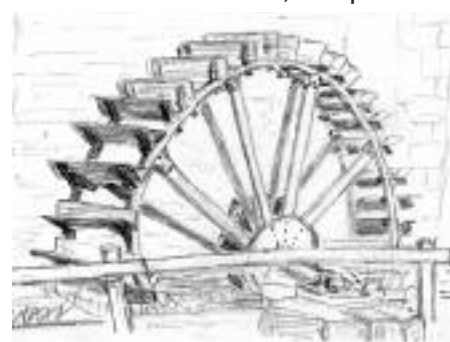
This apparently dates back almost a thousand years, to the same period as the Pilsbury motte and bailey site to which we are heading and is sited in the extreme NW corner of what would later become the de la Pole demesne. What could have been the function of this motte? Was it a purely defensive look-out tower? Why was it built so close to Pilsbury?

The land which we are traversing provides evidence of an even longer history. This is an area of Romano-British settlement which must be discerned with 'the eye of faith', preferably in winter. In amongst the hawthorn bushes and limestone boulders, it is possible to make out house platforms and small garden plots and yards, enclosed by low, and sometimes ill-defined banks and linear boundary banks running down-slope. These probably date from the 3rd or 4th century A.D.

Ludwell (K) is another example of a shrunken settlement. Even the houses marked on a map of 1614 have mostly gone, but it is possible, by referring to those maps, to identify their locations, as well as the former routes through the fields to Pilsbury.

Ludwell was part of the original Anglo-Saxon manor of Pilsbury. The Old English name **hlud waela** means 'loud spring' and, as we enter the hamlet, we pass the site of its noisy resurgence.

Records show that the mill was once used for fulling, which is good evidence for a local domestic woollen cloth-making industry.



8

We can now make speedy progress on the homeward stretch. We carry straight along the lane to Hartington. At every stage, there are reminders of the living history around us.

On our left, as we pass the boundary ditch separating Ludwell from Bank Top, we notice an adit to a lead mine following a vein into the hillside, probably, judging by its alignment, the same vein that we saw exploited on Bank Top. Leadmining has been an important rural industry here for centuries.

Exercise caution at all times and please ensure that children and dogs are closely supervised.

Just behind Bank Top Farm, we catch another glimpse of the earthworks of the Norman motte which we noticed earlier.

We join the trail in the old Hartington market place, where you can find designated parking spaces and public toilets. The outward leg of the route is often exposed to wind and rain, so we recommend boots, waterproofs and picnic provisions. The journey on the ground is likely to take you a good half-day but the journey into the past could well absorb you for many hours longer.



1

Do please visit our website for further details of the Pathways to Pilsbury Project and for an outline of the research that has been done so far.

www.pilsburycastle.org.uk

As we re-enter the village of Hartington, we can reflect that the ground we have covered has been the site of continuous settlement for many centuries. We have explored the site of a Norman castle, but have also encountered the evidence of human habitation for more than two millennia.



9

The furrows are half a chain apart (11 yards) and ridges run for about ten chains (220 yards) towards the river, with each strip covering an area of about two roods (half an acre.)

Just as the road bends up out of the village, you will notice a lane to the left which leads to the half-hidden



moated site of Poole Hall, the former manor house of the de la Pole family, now known as Moat Hall (B).

For several generations, from the 14th century onwards, the de la Poles were based here, as Lords of the Manor of Hartington, under the Duchy of Lancaster.

2

We now climb a wooden stile and follow the path as it rises slightly and then falls to meet a wall.

This is the boundary wall for Pilsbury Grange when it was a sheep farm belonging to the Cistercian abbey of Merevale, Warwickshire, founded in 1149.



The grange boundary **(F)** consists of a wall or bank incorporating an extensive landscape of a bare, steep-sided dry valley which has a wide, lush valley floor. A perched pond provides a vital water supply for livestock.

Immediately inside the wall boundary on the hillside to the right, there is a recorded Romano British site. The Anglo Saxon manor of Pilsbury and Ludwell probably had its plough lands up here. Later, the medieval grange would have held enclosures for wintering sheep and growing oats and hay in summer although, as yet, the position of the sheep house has not been proved. The footpath continues through a multitude of slight field banks and enclosures which show evidence of continuing cultivation, but which might have originated in any period.

We follow the path through a wicket gate, aiming diagonally right, across a large field, to pass through an open gateway on the left of some trees and then through another wicket gate, just beside a field gate. The path leads us up to the right, passing through an area of exposed limestone for 150 metres.

5

*On the opposite hillside we see more evidence of Romano-British field boundaries **(G)**. Continue diagonally right for 150 metres as the path slopes upwards. From here, cross over the track, continue to the wall and climb the stone stile. Pass through the wicket gate and descend steeply, following the path sharp left towards the road to the hamlet of Pilsbury.*

Just before this road, we climb a wooden stile in a fence line and once over the road, we pass through a wicket gate, cross the field and climb a stone stile.

*There is now a clearly defined route with signs and marker posts and a wall on our right, which leads us across several stiles. As we head down the grassy slope to Pilsbury Castle **(H)** we have an excellent view of the entire site. Please take note of the signs and enter the site via the designated access points.*

YOU HAVE ARRIVED. Enjoy exploring the site (see back page for details). In good weather conditions, it can offer a delightful spot for a picnic.



6

RETURN ROUTE

To return to Hartington, we leave the castle site at the same gate by which we entered. We turn sharp right down the footpath to the hamlet of Pilsbury (I), keeping the wall to our right.

Pilsbury is a shrunken village which dates back at least to Anglo-Saxon times. At the time of the Domesday Survey in 1086, it was part of the Manor of Pilsbury and Ludwell. The site of the monastic grange at Pilsbury is likely to have been here in the sheltered spot overlooking the river. The large present-day houses can be traced to the late 17th/early 18th century.

The hamlet of Pilsbury must have been a busy little spot in centuries gone by. It was at Pilsbury Grange, then farmed by Joseph Gould, that the earliest known recipe for the making of oatcakes was obtained by John Farey in 1815 as he collected material for a report on the agriculture and industry of Derbyshire.

After the stone stile, the path bears left for 100 metres, through a wicket gate and joins a cemented track leading down towards Bank Top Farm.

Follow this track downhill very briefly. Just as it bends to the left, our own path veers right through the field gate to the right of the road. We follow the wall line to the wall corner and continue ahead.

From this viewpoint we can discern the evidence of several centuries of human settlement.

Towards the Dove, beyond the cluster of buildings around Bank Top Farm, we can make out the earthworks of a small Norman motte on a crag (D).



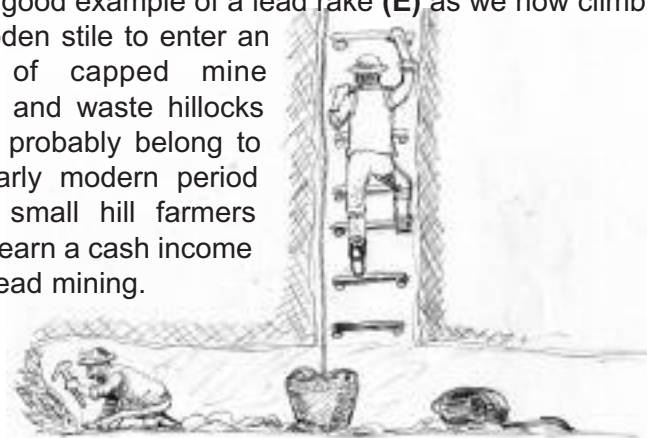
3

From the Pilsbury side of the river, we have a good view of this route in its steep descent on the opposite side of the valley. The green lane which snakes down towards the River Dove is called Marty Lane (J) and is still known locally as 'the old salt way'. From here it heads up onto the limestone plateau, then over the Derbyshire hills towards Monyash, Bakewell and Chesterfield.

We are now heading for home. We pass through the hamlet of Pilsbury, following the road and keeping the houses and outbuildings on our left.

At a bend in the road, with a limestone outcrop to our left, we pass Parks Barn and the site of the 'Isle of Man' oak plantation on our right. Both these features are mentioned in the William Gould diaries. After half a mile we pass the path that forms the escape route and just after this is Ludwell Farm.

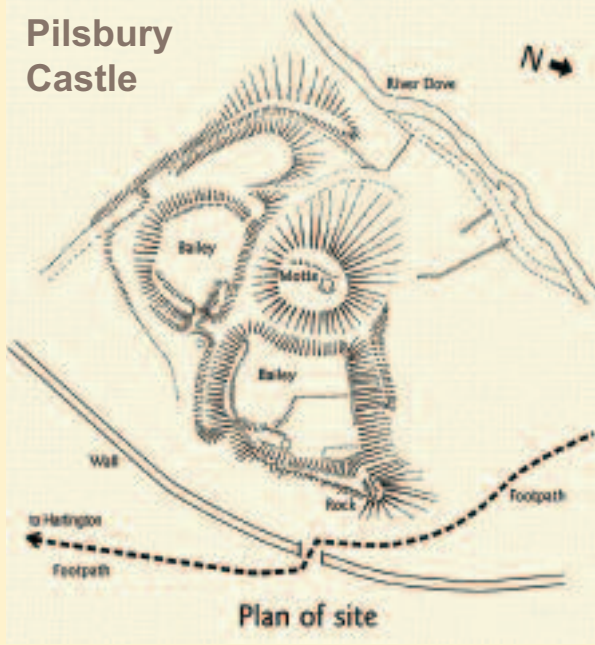
We follow the marker posts across the area, continuing straight ahead and crossing a large cleared field. We see a good example of a lead rake (E) as we now climb a wooden stile to enter an area of capped mine shafts and waste hillocks which probably belong to the early modern period when small hill farmers could earn a cash income from lead mining.



At this point a shorter walk following an ill-defined path leading down to the left at an angle to Ludwell Farm can form an 'escape route' if required (see map).

4

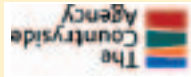
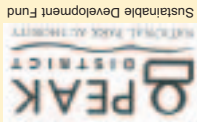
Pilsbury Castle



The earthworks here are the remains of a typical motte and bailey castle, which would have controlled the Dove Valley, the local people, and traffic along and across the river. Pilsbury Castle probably dates from the late 11th or early 12th century, just after the Norman Conquest. It was presumably built by the Ferrers family, later the Earls of Derby, perhaps as part of the Norman response to the unsuccessful rebellion in the north. Pilsbury was mentioned in a Ferrers charter as late as 1262.

The castle was mostly built on a shale promontory overlooking the river Dove. The two baileys (enclosures) would have contained timber buildings to house garrison and manor officials. They were defended by the ditches and banks you can see, with timber palisades on top, strengthened by the formidable reef limestone knoll to the East. The motte (mound) was perhaps topped by a wooden watchtower. A gatehouse would have guarded a bridge to the eastern bailey, with a further bridge leading to the motte. Smaller earthworks outside the castle to the north probably marked fields or garden plots. Other earthworks suggest an old river course, a defensive work or a fish pond.

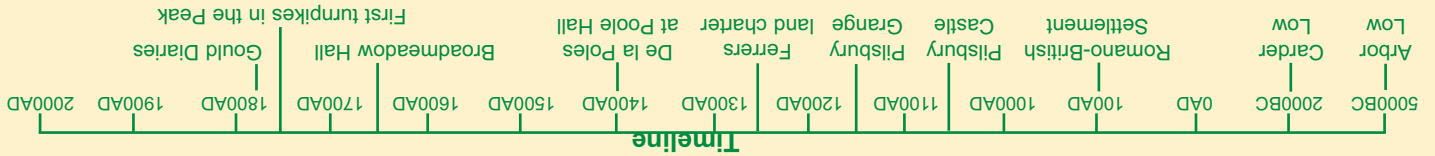
The sunken track which passes the southern bailey between castle and river may well have been an ancient way along the valley, linking the pre-Norman manors of Salham, Pilesberie & Lodewelle, and Horteden, all mentioned as part of 'the Land of Henry de Ferieres' in the Domesday Survey of 1086.



Printed on recycled paper
Line drawings by Sheila Hine

The Pilsbury Castle trails were produced by the Pilsbury Castle Interpretation Group.

Public transport available. Details from: Busline: 0870 608 1608 or visit: www.peakdistrict.org



Join us on a journey into the past! Two Pilsbury Castle trails from Hartington and Longnor will guide both walkers and readers to the best example of a Norman motte and bailey castle site in the Peak District. Each guide explores a historical landscape of ancient settlement and trackways and throws fresh light on the interpretation of the castle site. The Pilsbury Castle Trails were produced as part of the 2nd Stage of the Pilsbury Castle Interpretation Project, the whole of which ran from 2001-2004. For further information, visit our website www.pilsburycastle.org.uk where you will find details of our research and conclusions to date. The collaboration continues! Can you help us uncover further evidence?

Pathways to Pilsbury

Pilsbury Castle

£2



A walk through time.....

from
Hartington
to
Pilsbury Castle