



Fig. 1. Trematon Castle. The shell-keep from the south east (outside the bailey).

Trematon

16. Trematon

The castle existed by 1086, when Reginald de Valletort held the manor from Robert of Mortain, as it is specifically mentioned in Domesday Book. His descendants held it down to 1270, when the manor and castle were sold to Richard, earl of Cornwall. It has been noted (Burls 2005; Page 2000) that this sale (as well as the sale to Richard of the castle at Cardinham, also in Cornwall, in 1268) may have been made under pressure from this powerful figure, who was seeking to re-establish his reputation and standing after his downfall in the Barons' War of 1264-65. Richard here exploited the circumstances of Cornish families of ancient origin who were now short of cash.

In 1337, the castle became part of the Duchy of Cornwall. It was described then as “a well-walled castle” with a hall, kitchen and two-storeyed chamber built of timber and plaster (structures built by earl Edmund, Richard's son) as well as a chapel and

gatehouse with a leaded roof. Whether the structures referred to (and battlements mentioned elsewhere in this source) were in the bailey or on the motte is not specified (Hull 1971, 121-123). Repairs are documented in the 14th century, notably £20 spent on the defences in 1385-86 in anticipation of French attacks on the nearby coast. By Leland's day, the castle was ruinous.

The principal remains are the 13th-century gatehouse, the bailey curtain wall and the shell-keep on the large motte. Bailey and motte-top were formerly joined by ascending wing-walls. The doorway of the shell-keep faces the bailey but it is not now apparent how it was reached. The entrance is some 7ft (2.14m) wide, having a square-headed gateway (sockets for a former timber lintel) with a round-headed arch above, and a draw-bar. Secondary vertical grooves relate to a later door-hanging.



Fig. 2. Trematon Castle. Copper engraved print from Francis Grose's *Antiquities of England and Wales*, 1786. Vol. VIII, opp. p. 46. (Sparrow/Hooper). View from the north-east.

The east wing-wall starts near the first-floor rear entrance of the gatehouse: perhaps a stair originally rose along the wing-wall from here? Since the (sole) arrow-loop in the shell-wall overlooks the bailey near the western wing-wall line, perhaps a stairway was originally protected by that wing-wall? In either or both cases, the path/stair must have turned abruptly at the summit to connect with the more centrally-placed doorway of the shell-keep. There are no scars where the wing-walls may have met the shell-keep. They must have been free-standing from the first, or possibly later additions.

But Renn suggests this loop survives from a rebuilding of the parapet and crenellations which removed others. Indeed, the top-most masonry of the whole shell may be a rebuild. There are indications of a change in masonry style and (externally) suggestions of some straight joints which may reflect an earlier and lower set of crenellations. The parapet and wall-walk is complete and carries a complete set of battlements. Below them (externally) is a continuous set of rectangular sockets indicating either timbers relating to the internal buildings or timbers supporting external defensive hours.

The shell-keep has a tall, sloping plinth to a shell wall some 25ft high. It is almost oval in plan, but the published plan (figs. 7, 11) (Toy 1933) is slightly misleading since on the northern side the shell-wall is largely straight, perhaps indicating that the main range of domestic building(s) stood against it. Its current austere emptiness creates a feeling of isolated and gloomy enclosure, but the presence of earlier buildings is indicated by a continuous (including the entrance area) series of corbels, with concave upper surfaces to accommodate beams (as at Restormel) which runs round the interior underneath the wall-walk (fig. 9).

There are no indications of masonry joints for abutted structures against the inside face: either the structures were of timber, or of masonry but un-bonded (*cf.* Restormel). There are no stairs in the wall-thickness; they must have run from inside the domestic buildings or the courtyard, either flanking or at 90 degrees to the shell-wall. There is a single step in the wall-walk where the sole arrow-loop is situated, perhaps indicating the location of one such stair. Despite its impressive appearance, the shell-keep presents difficulties of date and reconstruction.

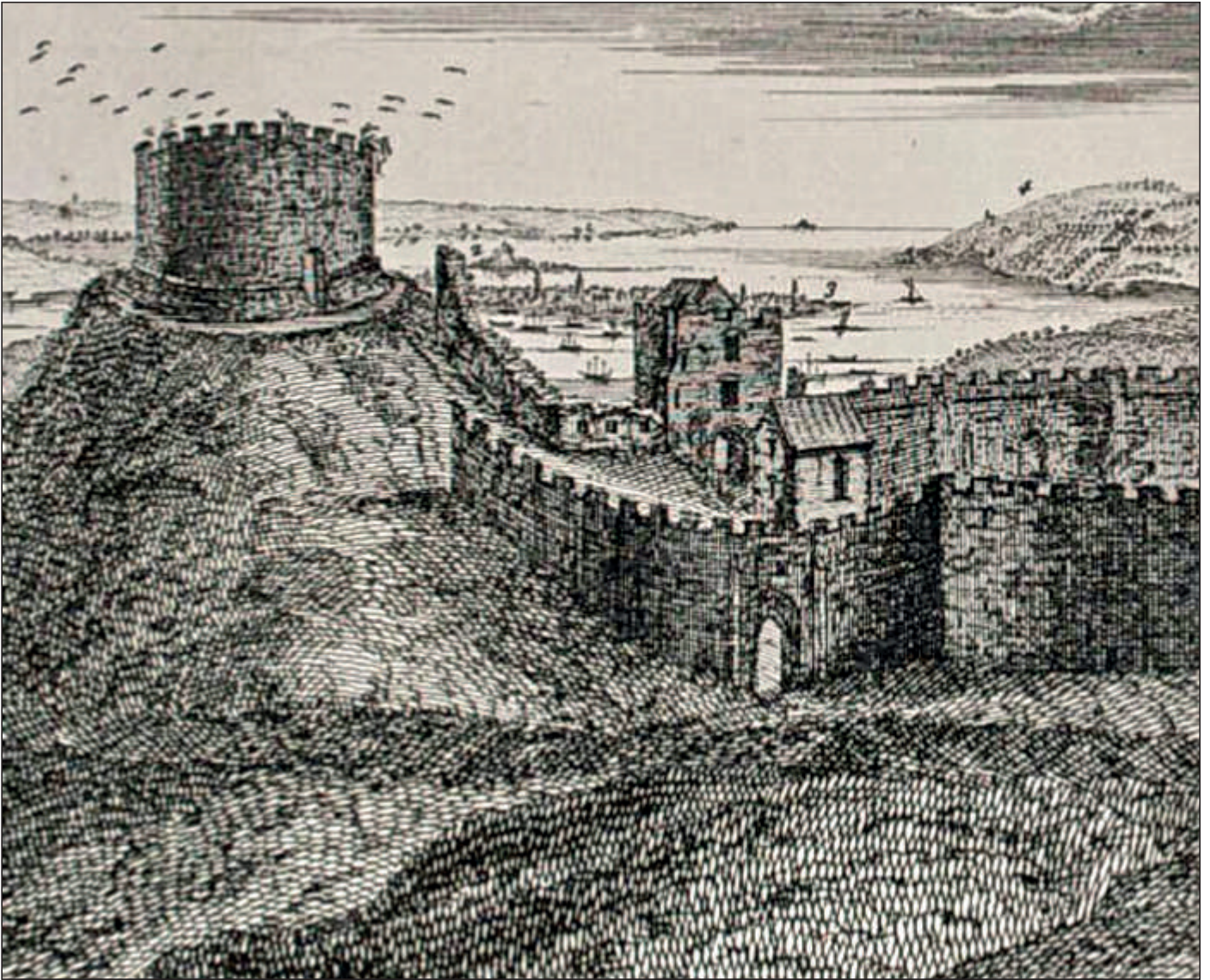


Fig. 3. Trematon Castle. Samuel & Nathaniel Buck, 1734. (Detail). View from the west. Gatehouse on the east side, & postern gate on the west. See fig. 4 for the full extent of the bailey. At least one free-standing building is depicted in the bailey - the chapel (now lost) - near the gatehouse. Torpoint & Hamoaze estuary in the background.

It could be 12th-13th century (by Valletort) but in its final heightened form it is more probably late 13th-century (by earl Richard or Edmund). By now, it may have had continuous internal buildings or one range on the (straight) north side and covered galleries at a high level elsewhere. Since the interior has not been excavated, however, we cannot rule out the possibility that a *donjon* stood in its centre and that the corbels and sockets relate to a structure bridging such a *donjon* and the shell-wall (as revealed at Launceston by a line of sockets in the masonry). The exterior face of the shell-keep bears traces of (presumably) post-medieval repairs in several places. In a survey of 1650, the castle (including “on a stepe mount the outsides of an old tower”) was described as ruinous (Pounds 1984, 195). Existing ground contours within the shell-keep appear to result from modern landscaping.

As at other places, the relative values of the shell-keep as a defensive/residential structure and one whose wall-walk afforded pleasing views should be considered. By 1337 there was a deer-park immediately north of this side of the castle (Hull 1971, 121-122). On the other side are beautiful seaward vistas, for the better view of which part of the curtain wall was demolished around 1810 to benefit the house newly-built in the bailey.

Internal Diameter: 72ft x 57ft (22m x 17.4m).
Shell wall height: (to wall-walk) 25ft (7.6m).

Motte height: 40 ft (12m) from the gatehouse level.

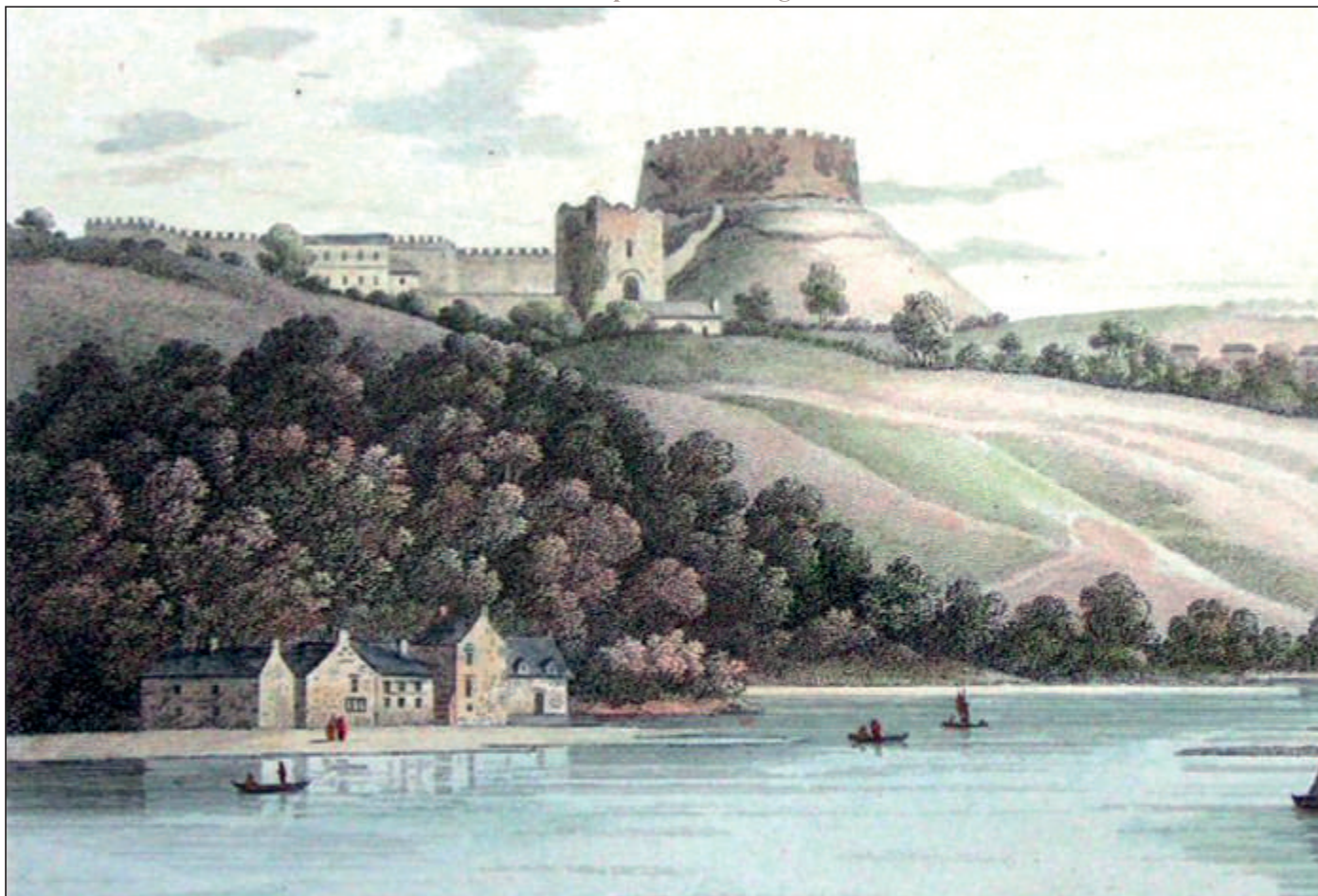
Published refs: Borlase 1769, 354-356; Toy 1933; Brown *et alii* 1963, II, 846-847; Renn 1968, 330-332; King 1983, I, 76; Hull (ed) 1971; Pounds (ed) 1984. Forthcoming: Guy N. W. & Higham, R. A., 2018, *CSG Journal*, 32.



ABOVE: Fig. 4. Trematon Castle. S & N Buck, 1734. (Slightly cropped but much fuller detail than fig. 3). View from the west. Gatehouse on the east side, postern on the west and full extent of bailey. Note that in this view the wing walls do not fully extend up to the shell wall (unlike Toy, who made assumption that they once did).

BELOW: Fig. 5. Trematon Castle, from 'Antient Castles of England and Wales', Woolnoth & Brayley, Vol II 1825. View from the south-east, from Forder Creek, near St. Germans. Coloured later.

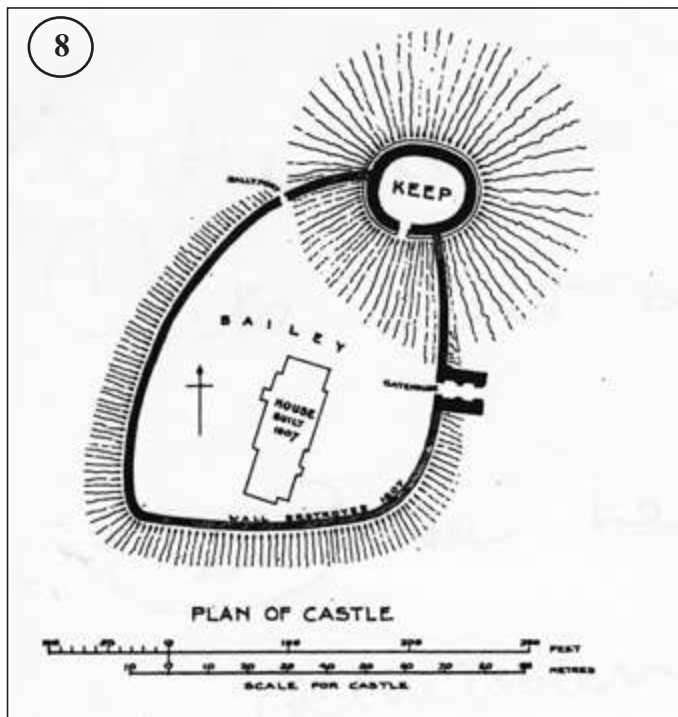




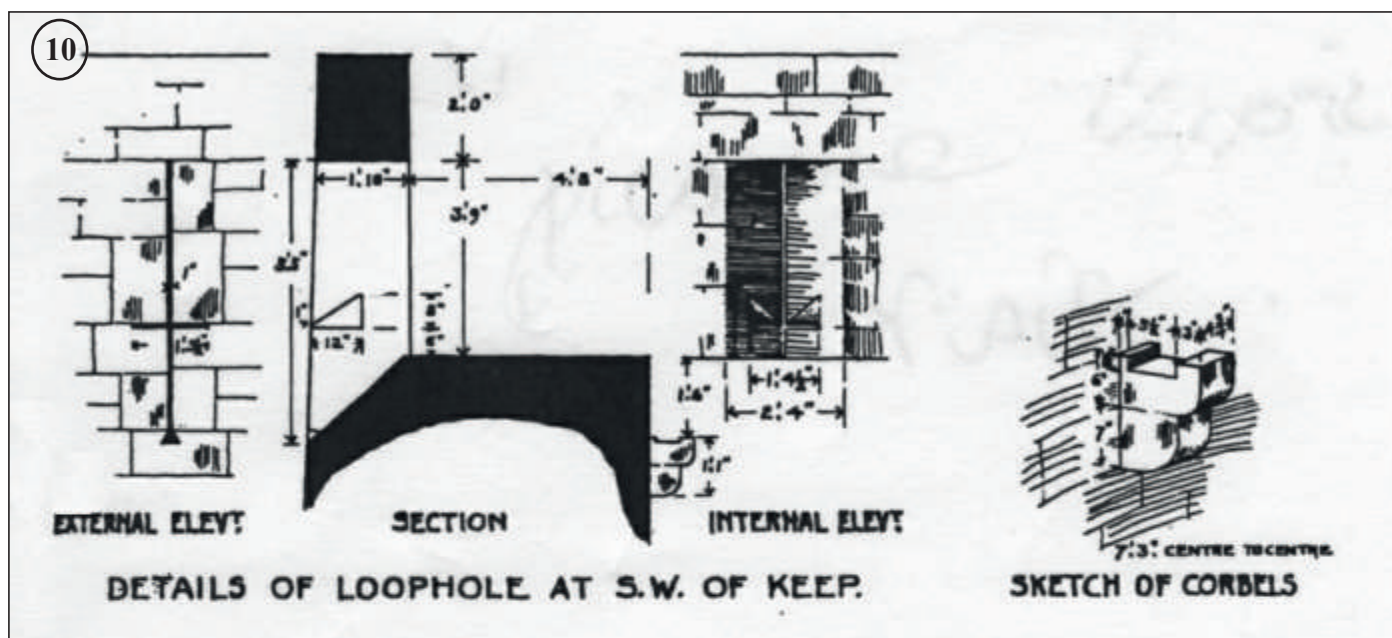
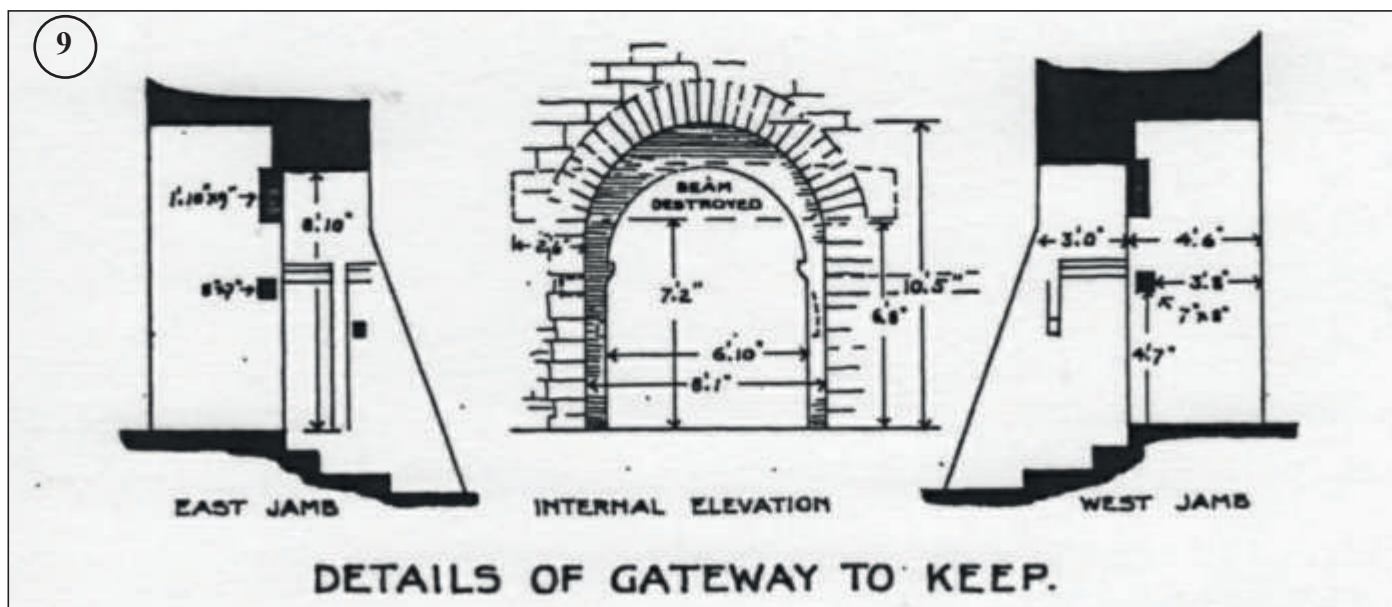
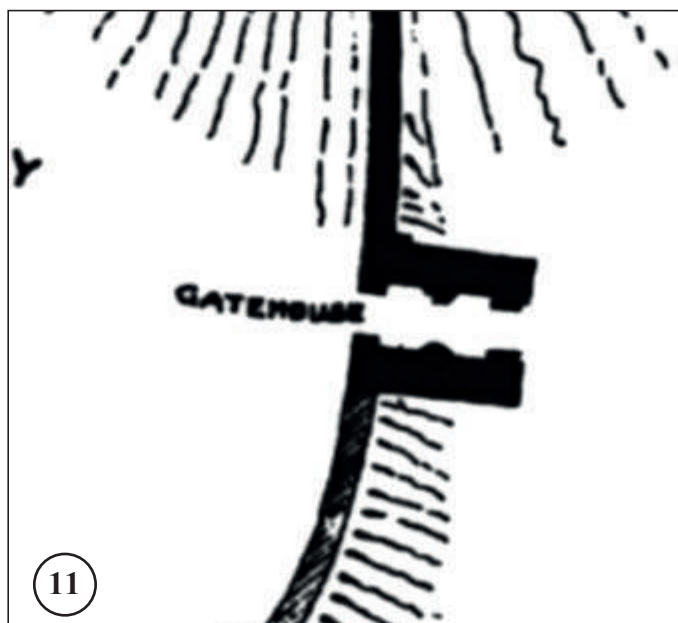
ABOVE: Fig. 6. 'Trematon Castle from the River Lyner'. Copperplate. By Joseph Farington, Engraved by Letitia Byrne; Publisher: T Cadell & W Davies, Strand Date: 1813, after completion of the country house.

BELOW: Fig. 7. Drawn by T. Allom. 'Cornwall Illustrated, in a Series of Views of Castles, Seats of the Nobility, Mines, Picturesque Scenery, Towns, Public Buildings, Churches, Antiquities &c.', Engraved on steel. With Historical & Descriptive accounts by J. Britton & E. W. Brayley Esq.; Published by Fisher, Son & Co., London, 1831.





Figs. 8 - 11. All from Toy, 1933. © The Sidney Toy Estate. Reproduced with thanks.



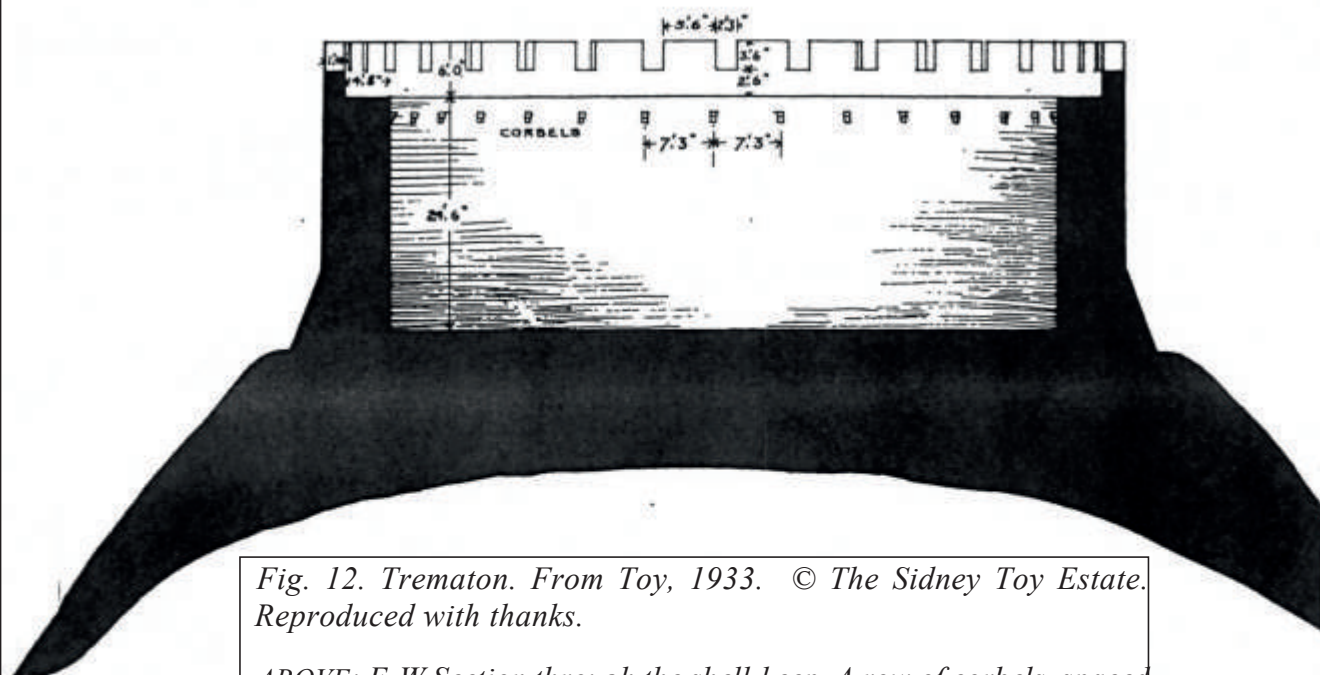
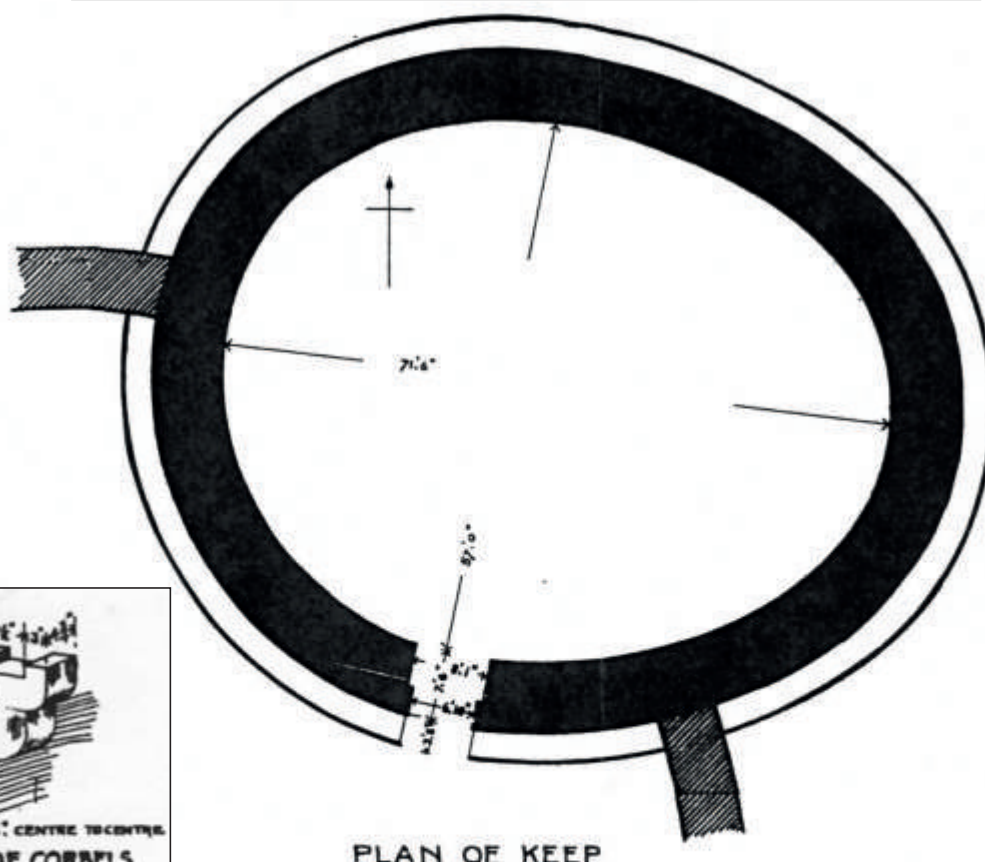


Fig. 12. Trematon. From Toy, 1933. © The Sidney Toy Estate. Reproduced with thanks.

ABOVE: E-W Section through the shell-keep. A row of corbels, spaced 7ft 3 inches apart runs the whole length of the oval circuit.

BELOW: Plan of the oval keep. A range of domestic buildings were probably aligned on the straighter section on the north side. The missing sections of wing wall are shown on plan by a line break.





ABOVE. Fig. 13. The shell-keep. View of the shell-keep from the east clearly showing the wing-wall break, the berm, and the base batter. The shell-keep is probably late 13th century, at least in its heightened form, contemporary with the (remodelled) gatehouse. Copyright on this image is owned by Derek Harper and is licensed for reuse under the Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 2.0 license. Reproduced with thanks.

BELOW: Fig. 14. Shell-keep from the east from outside the bailey, in the late summer of 2015.





ABOVE: Fig. 15. The (remodelled) c. 1270s three-storey gatehouse from the inner bailey, with wide arrow- and gun-looped embrasures along the east wing-wall ascending to the shell-keep.

BELOW: Fig. 16. The north façade of the gatehouse looking down from the shell-keep outside and along the east line of the wing-wall. The gatehouse extends exclusively beyond the line of the curtain wall.



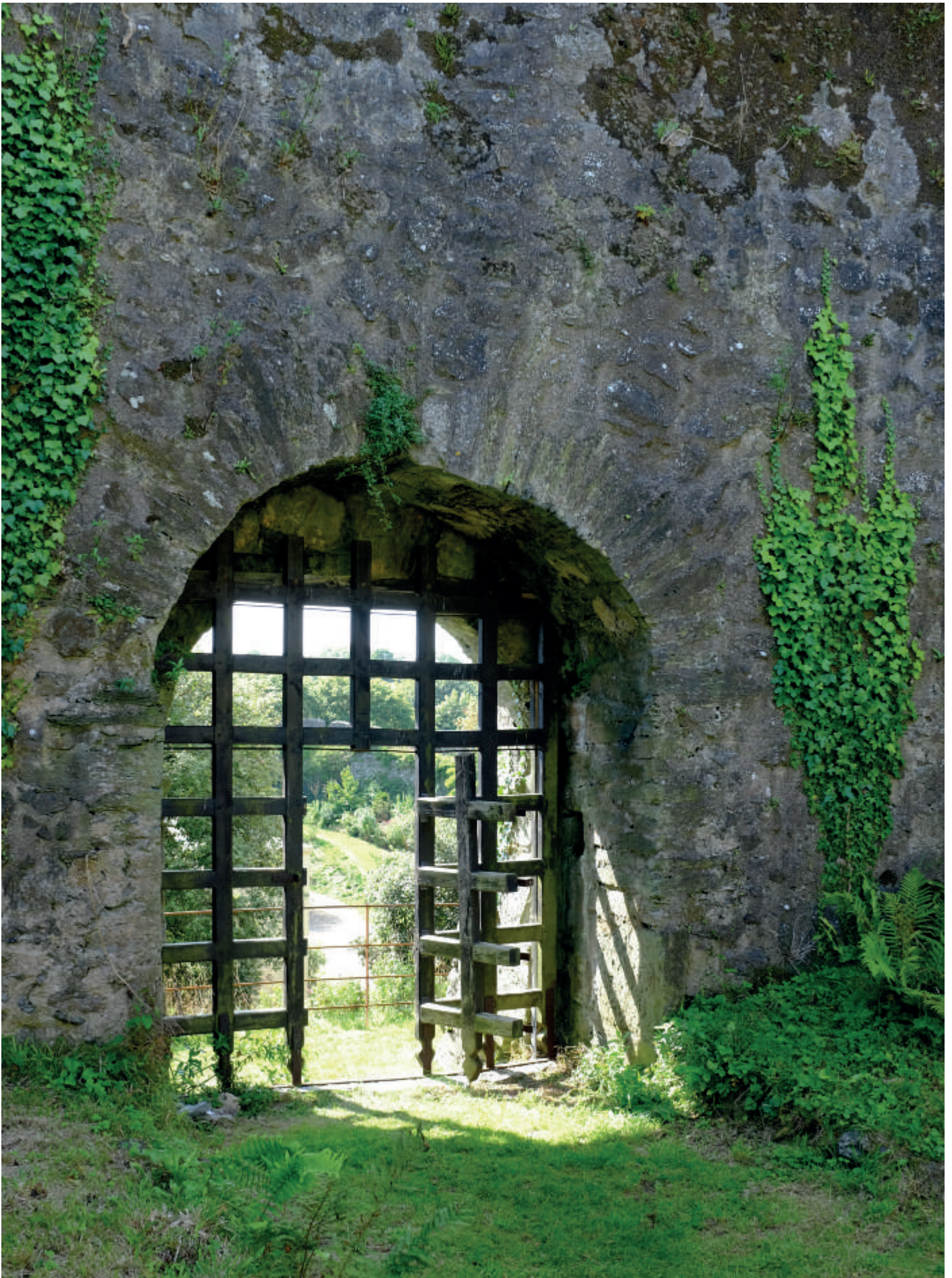


Fig. 17. Entrance from within the shell-keep looking south toward the bailey. Modern wooden lattice gate. The walls are 8ft thick, not including the base batter. There was no portcullis.



Trematon. Figs. 18-21. Clockwise. Left: 18: The sole remaining cruciform arrow slit along the shell-keep wall-walk from the exterior (see also fig. 10). Right: 19: Same loop from the interior of the shell-keep wall-walk.

Below: Fig 20: Jambs /sidewalls within the entrance vault with modern lattice gate cutting through the chamfered impost. The vertical groove relates to a later door hanging. Fig. 21: One of the many indented grooved corbels that run around the interior (see fig. 12). Images 19-21 courtesy of Oliver Creighton.

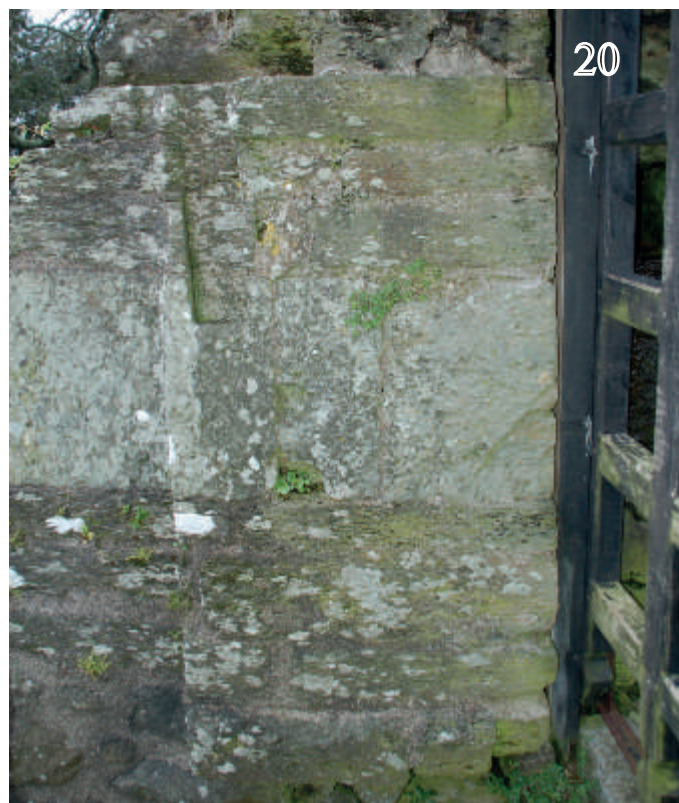




Fig. 22. ABOVE & Fig 23. BELOW: Views of the shell-keep exterior from the west (above) and east (below) showing surviving crenellations, beam sockets below to support a continuous line of timber hoarding and indications in the fabric of a heightening of the wall by some 10ft - all work of the late 13th century.





ABOVE: Fig. 24: View of the plain 25ft high shell-keep interior, looking north, showing surviving crenellations and the continuous row of corbels relating to former structures.

BELOW: Fig. 25: View from the gatehouse looking north toward the shell-keep. It highlights the distance between the east wing-wall and the shell-keep entrance.

