



*Fig. 1. Wiston Castle shell-keep, from the south, within the bailey. The masonry shell on the motte probably dates from c. 1220.*

## **Wiston**

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The castle was established in the early 12th century as part of a castle-borough-church plantation belonging to the Flemish settlement of Pembrokeshire organised by king Henry I. It takes its name from Wizo, a prominent Flemish settler-leader. Wizo was in this area not later than 1112 and he was dead by 1130. The castle was first referred to (in Welsh sources) under the year 1147 but presumably had existed earlier (Toorians 1990). The castle was created by adding a motte to the perimeter of an existing Welsh enclosure of prehistoric or dark age date, providing a ready-made bailey. The bailey may have contained the primary settlement nucleus; in the 13th century, the borough developed outside it (figs. 1, 4).

During the 12th century, the castle passed in and out of Flemish and Welsh control on several occasions. In 1220, it was destroyed by the Welsh king Llewelyn ap Iorwerth but king Henry III then ordered the earl of Pembroke, William Marshal (the younger, d.1231) to rebuild it. The episode provides the last specific documented reference to the castle.

The existing steps up to the motte are modern (fig. 7) and the medieval access route from the bailey to the shell-keep is unknown. The shell-wall is a polygon with about 16 sides (precision impossible on account of some wall-collapse) and a battered base, supporting a wall 5ft/1.5m thick. Its full original height can only be guessed at since the upper portions, including a presumed wall-walk, no longer survive. Entrance was through a tall doorway (with draw-bar sockets) which faces the bailey to its south: thus suggesting the stairs did not follow a wing-wall connected with the bailey defences (fig. 2).

The interior of the shell-keep shows evidence of three phases of use and construction. First, the original shell wall may have had buildings ranged against its interior but no trace of them was found in excavation. Perhaps they were timber-framed and left no ground evidence; perhaps they were of lean-to design. Second, a series of steps was added on the east side of the entrance, presumably to give access to a new structure which had an upper storey. A radial wall relating to this

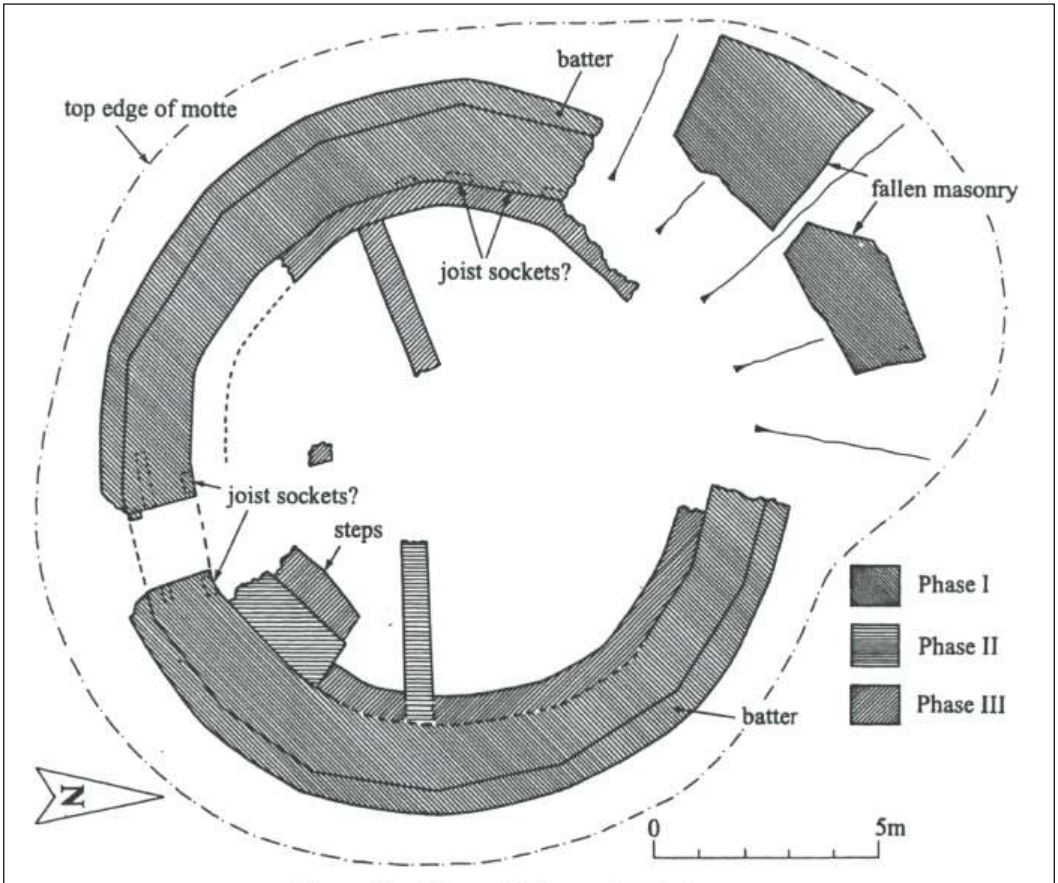


Fig. 2. Wiston Castle keep, plan. From Murphy, K. 1995, 'The castle and borough of Wiston, Pembrokeshire', *Archaeologia Cambrensis* Vol. 144 p. 71-102 (p. 79). Reproduced with thanks. It is thought that Phase I, c. 1220, was built by William Marshal the Younger, (d. 1231).

structure survives immediately north of the steps. Third, the whole of the inner face of the shell-wall was thickened by about 3ft (1m) with an additional wall, to which a radial wall connected on the west side, and the earlier steps near the entrance were altered. At this point, it is possible that the whole structure ceased to be a shell-keep and became enclosed, with roof-timbers supported by the additional masonry and an upper floor supported by the (now, two) radial walls. On the other hand, no evidence of a central supporting pier exists, so this remains hypothetical. Collapse of the shell-wall on the north-west side makes total reconstruction impossible, as a radial wall and other details may have disappeared here.

The construction of the first masonry phase may be ascribed to the documented rebuilding of the 1220s. Prior to that, it is assumed that the castle had remained

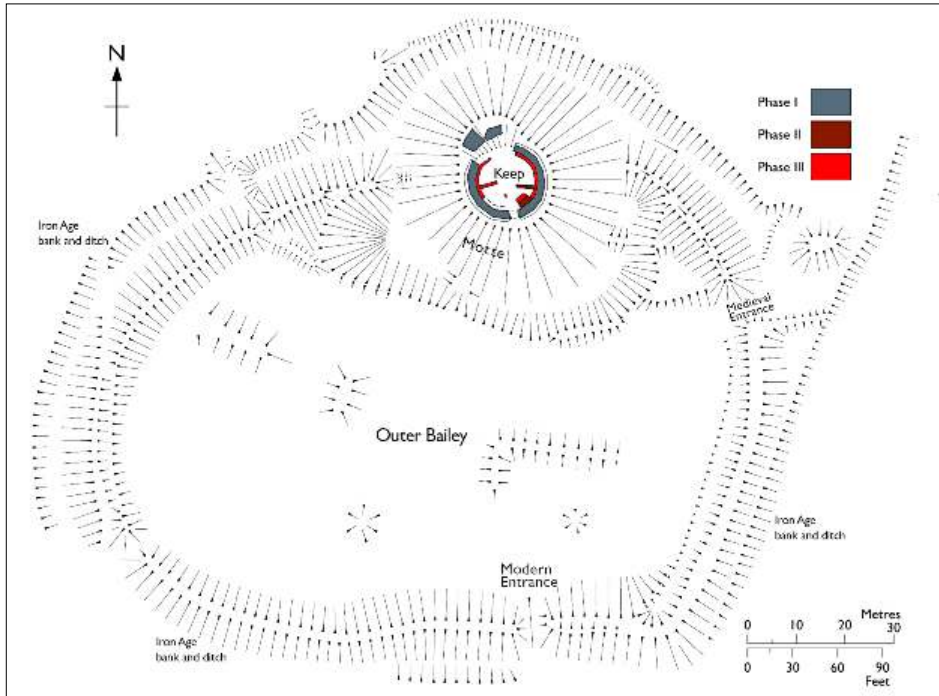
timber-built. Using this loose dating framework, the second and third phases of construction in the shell-keep may have been in the mid-later-13th century. But this remains a hypothesis and the first building of the masonry shell-keep may have occurred earlier, in the 12th century. Excavation on the motte in 1994 produced evidence of occupation to around 1300, but by that time Wiston was in decline and its lords of the manor were the Wogan family, based at Picton castle, not far away.

*Internal Diameter:* 43ft (13.1m).

*Height of shell:* 13ft (4m) - but upper parts lost.

*Motte height:* 40ft (12.5m)

*Published refs:* King 1962; Renn 1968, 349; King 1983, II, 398; Toorians 1990; Murphy 1995, 71-102; Turner 1996.



ABOVE: Fig. 3. Wiston Castle. Plan of the shell keep and its oval bailey. From the most recent Cadw revision. © Crown Copyright (2015) Cadw. Reproduced with thanks.

BELOW: Fig. 4. Wiston Castle. An imaginary bird's-eye view reconstruction suggesting the motte steps may have originally descended directly on axis with the entrance. Drawing © and courtesy of the illustrator Chris Jones-Jenkins.







ABOVE: Fig. 5. Aerial view of Wiston. An RCAHMW colour oblique aerial photograph of Wiston Castle from the north-west. Taken on 11 January 2006 by Toby Driver, ref: AP\_2006\_0015. C858526 © Crown Copyright. RCAHMW, Welsh Government. Reproduced with thanks.

BELOW: Fig. 6. A sketch of Wiston Castle, from the north-east, in 1740 (detail). The castle has become a picturesque feature in a parkland setting. The motte is ringed with young sweet chestnuts; the drawing may suggest a wet moat. Reproduced by courtesy of the Bodleian Library, Oxford, (Gough Maps 17, f. 25v).





*Fig. 7. Wiston Castle. 50 modern steps to the motte top. The mound rises to a height of some 40 feet, with a base circumference of about 550 feet.*





*ABOVE: Fig. 8. Wiston shell-keep courtyard looking east to base of stairs (right), thickened radial wall and later cross-wall.*

*BELOW: Fig. 9. Shell keep looking west to thickened radial shell wall and 5 joist holes (of varying sizes) in the original wall. These might indicate concentric lean-to buildings perhaps in Phase 1, (see fig. 2).*







ABOVE: Fig. 10. Wiston shell-keep from the south. The shell wall is a 16 or 18-sided polygon on the outside. Walls sloped outward. Damaged arched south entry has stone voussoirs and draw-bar holes. The wall varies from 1.5 to 2 metres and from 3 to 4 metres height.

BELOW: Fig. 11. Interior of the keep looking toward the south entrance. There are a number of joist sockets around the entrance jambs and arch. The entrance doors may have opened outwards.







*Figs. 12-15 Clockwise. ABOVE: 12 & 13. The inside of the jambs to the entrance with one, possibly two draw bar holes. Wall thickness here about 1.6 metres.*

*BELOW: Fig. 14 (lower right). Detail of the joist holes seen in fig. 9. Left: Fig. 15. Profile of the exterior shell wall on the east highlighting the base batter.*

