

Goodrich Castle

Goodrich Castle is the most splendid in the county of Herefordshire and one of the best examples of English military architecture. It is still impressive despite its ruinous state. The castle is perched on a rocky spur above the River Wye, four miles southwest of Ross-on-Wye.

Godric's Castle - no doubt named after Godric Mappestone, who held the land nearby - is first recorded in 1101. Nothing is left of Godric's stronghold but within the bailey, very close to the later curtain, rises a well-preserved though relatively small Norman keep. Henry II took over the castle and the keep is generally attributed to him, but the royal accounts record very little expenditure here.

The keep is a tall, square tower with pilaster buttresses and Norman windows. The original first floor entrance was later converted into a window, a new doorway being inserted immediately below.

Strangely enough, the existing curtain and corner towers are not the first on the site. King John granted Goodrich to the mighty William Marshal, Earl of Pembroke, and a stone enclosure followed. Some of his masonry is embedded in the present east curtain and the foundations of a round tower underlie the present southwest tower.

A later Earl of Pembroke, William de Valence, tore this structure down and erected his own. His building here is contemporary and comparable with the Edwardian castles of Wales. Such a castle is a rarity in England. It is square in plan, the more vulnerable south and east sides being protected by a wide, rock-cut ditch. A thick curtain surrounds the bailey, with massive round towers at three corners and a gatehouse occupying the fourth. Each tower rises from a solid square base, which sinks back into the cylinder in pyramid fashion. Forming spurs. The spurs projecting from the southeast tower are particularly high.