

Wigmore Castle

According to the Domesday Book, this was one of the strongholds founded by William Fitz Osbern, Earl of Hereford. Soon after the castle was granted to Ralph de Mortimer. Henry II captured the castle from Hugh de Mortimer in 1155, and it was here that Prince Edward obtained refuge following his escape from Hereford Castle in 1265.

The most notorious of the line was Roger Mortimer, first Earl of March, who played a leading part in the deposition and murder of Edward II. In concert with his lover, Queen Isabella, Mortimer ruled England for three years until being overthrown by the young Edward III. He died on the gallows at Tyburn and Wigmore was given to the Earl of Salisbury, but the Mortimers regained their lands and title by marriage. They served with distinction during the Hundred Years War, but in 1425, the Mortimer line died out and the castle more or less died with them.

The castle is in a very precarious condition nowadays, its walls overgrown or buried in debris, and threatening to crumble further unless essential work is carried out. If the remains were to be excavated and consolidated, Wigmore would be a castle of considerable interest, but at present there is just an atmosphere of desolation. It is a powerfully sited, motte and bailey stronghold with a lot of masonry still standing. The oval shell keep on the large motte incorporates Norman portions, but all the other stonework belongs to a reconstruction of about 1300, probably undertaken by the infamous Roger Mortimer. There are three towers on the line of the bailey curtain, two oblong and one half round. The largest tower contained a suite of chambers and is divided by a cross wall. Note the arch of the gatehouse, half buried in an accumulation of earth.