

**HISTORICAL SKETCH
OF STOKESAY
CASTLE, SALOP**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649752171

Historical Sketch of Stokesay Castle, Salop by Thomas Wright

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THOMAS WRIGHT

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HISTORICAL SKETCH
OF
Stokesay Castle
SALOP.

By the late THOMAS WRIGHT, Esq., M.A., F.S.A.,
Hon. M.R.S.L.



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HISTORICAL SKETCH
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STOKESAY CASTLE
SALOP.

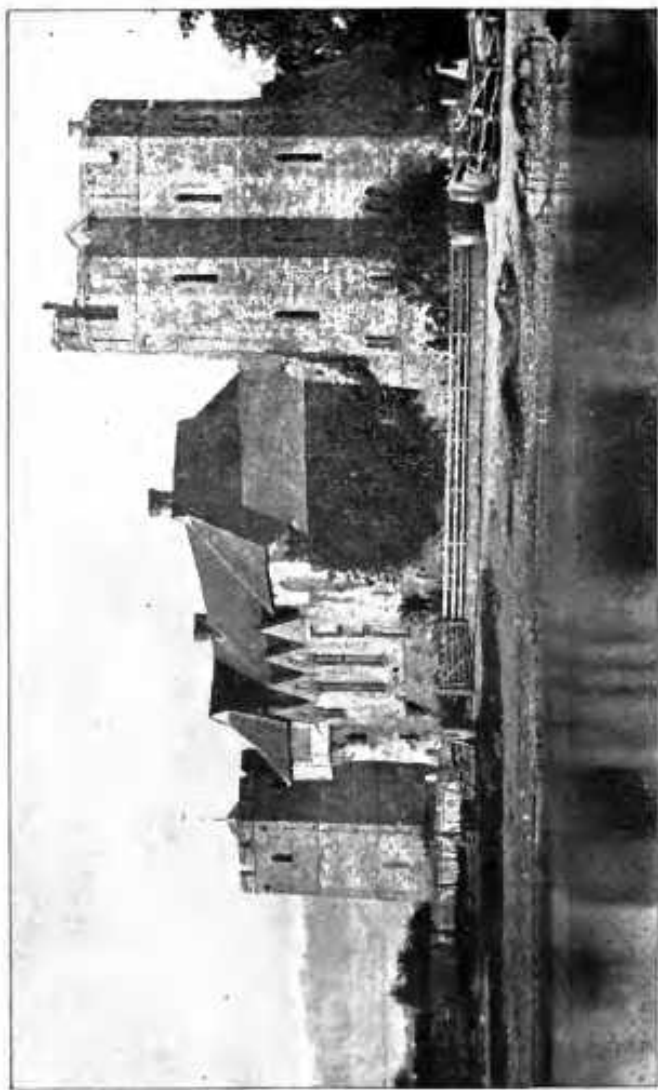
By the late THOMAS WRIGHT, Esq., M.A., F.S.A.,
Hon. M.R.S.L.



Photo by Frith & Co.

STOKESAY CASTLE—Gateway.

Ludlow,
Published by G. Woolley, Corve Street,
1921.



STOKESAY CASTLE.

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Stokesay Castle

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STOKESAY CASTLE.

STOKESAY CASTLE (as it is commonly, though erroneously called) is one of the most perfect and interesting specimens of an early fortified mansion in England; and from the beauty of its situation, in a valley bounded by steep and richly wooded hills, at whose base the river Oney flows through luxuriant meadows, it forms an object as interesting to the artist as to the antiquarian.*

At the time of the Norman conquest the manor of Stoke was held by Ældred, a freeman, under Edric Sylvaticus, a powerful Saxon thane; but on the wild Edric joining in a revolt of the Welsh, his estates were seized by the king, and in 1070 the earldom of Shrewsbury, with three hundred and fifty seven manors in Shropshire, were conferred by the Conqueror on his kinsman Roger de Montgomery.

Domesday Book speaks thus of Stokesay:—"The same Roger holdeth Stokes. Here are seven hides geldable. The arable land is sufficient for fourteen ox teams. In demesne are five teams, and sixteen among the male and female serfs; and there are twenty villeins with eight teams, and nine female cottars. Here is a mill yielding nine quarters of wheat yearly, and here is a miller and a keeper of bees."

After the death of Roger de Montgomery and of his eldest son, his estates were forfeited and Stoke again fell to the crown, in consequence of Roger de Belesme the younger son, having espoused the cause of Robert, Duke of Normandy, in his attempt to obtain the English throne. The greater part of his Norman followers returned to their own country; but Walter de Lacy having

* Stoke is considered by Mr. Parker and other high authorities to be one of the best specimens in England of a fortified mansion as distinguished from a castle.

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speedily resumed his allegiance, obtained a pardon, and was allowed to hold Stoke and other estates from the king *in capite*.

In accordance with the feudal customs of the time, the manor of Stoke, during the tenure of the Lacys, was bestowed by them, as superior lords, on a branch of the family of Say, Lord of Clun and Richard's Castle, of whom Theodoric de Say, in 1156, gave the advowson of Stokesay (the first time so called) to the abbey of Haughmond, confirmed by Hugh de Laci as chief lord, and he also gave some land at Stoke to the abbey of St. Peter and St. Paul at Shrewsbury.

Hugh de Laci, in making a return of the knight's fees of his barony, states that Helias de Say acknowledges a service of three knight's fees; the knights to be between the ages of sixteen and sixty, and be furnished with horses. Helias de Say died soon after this, and was succeeded by his son Hugh, who died 1194, and was succeeded by a second Helias, who gives "to Andrew Fitzmilo of Ludlow, for his homage and service, and for twenty-three marks, the mill of Stoke and Wettlington, with suit of his men, and a messuage and meadow to be held in fee for a rent of one pound of pepper."

Though the name of Say has been retained, the manor does not appear to have been long held by that family, for it had reverted to the Lacys before the accession of Henry III. and continued in their holding during several generations, till on the death of Walter de Laci, in 1240, his estates were divided between two grand-daughters; Maud, the eldest, married Geoffrey de Genneville, and had the castles of Ludlow and Weobley, and other estates, and Margery, the youngest, married John de Verdun, and received Stoke as a part of her portion.

This John de Verdun had considerable estates in Leicestershire; but in the forty-sixth of Henry III, being one of the Barons marchers, he and several others were ordered to reside on their border properties, to check the incursions of the Welsh. He was active on the side of the king during the barons' wars. In the fifty-fourth of

Henry III. he was signed with the cross, together with Prince Edward, to go to the Holy Land, where he went accordingly. He married Margerie, daughter of Gilbert de Say, by whom he obtained the manor and castle of Weobley, in Herefordshire, and a part of Ludlow. He died in 1274, and the feoffee of Stokesay at that time was Reginald de Gray; but it does not appear how he became so, and in 1281 he sold the manor and lands to John de Ludlowe. A rent of eight shillings *per annum* is reserved to John and Matilda de Gray, his wife, in lieu of all services, reliefs, aids, etc.; and for this John de Ludlowe was to give a hen sparrow-hawk.

In the *Fadera*, under the date of 1284, Laurence de Ludlow (the son of the purchaser of Stoke) is said to hold the manor of Stokesay for one knight's fee, under John de Gray, who held it under John de Verdun.

The family of Ludlowe sprung from the town of that name, and seem to have been of some importance, several of them having filled the office of sheriff of Shropshire. William Ludlo (father of the Laurence who, in 1290, obtained a licence to embattle his mansion at Stokesay), was governor of Montgomery castle, and perambulator of the forest of Morse. One of the family, according to Speed, was, in 1349, the founder of St. Mary's White Friars, at Ludlow, which Leland describes as "a fayre and costlie thinge, outside Corve gate."

It remained in this family for many generations, till on the death, in 1498, of Sir Richard Ludlowe, whose wife was the daughter of Edward Lord of Powis, it passed to his son John, who left two daughters, both married to sons of Sir Henry Vernon; of Haddon Hall, Derbyshire, and of Tonge, in Shropshire; and the youngest, Anne, with her husband, Thomas Vernon, took up their residence at Stokesay. They were living there when Leland visited Shropshire, by whom it is twice noticed in his *Itinerary*:—"About V miles owt of Ludlo, betwixt Ludlo and Bishop Castle, Stoke Say belonging some time to the Ludlos, now to the Vernons, builded like a castell—V miles owt of Ludlo." Again he says on his way to Bishop's Castle,—“There is alsoe a bridge at *Whister* of