

The Castle
Taken from A local history study by
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Apart from the church, the oldest building remains are the mounds in a field known as Hall Garth on the southern road out of Fleetham, which is marked on the OS 6" 55 1857 edition. These are the remains of Henry le Scrope's castle, Chief Baron of the Exchequer, which he had licence to crenellate in 1314.¹ Thirteen years previously, Brian FitzAlan had leave to crenellate his castle at Kilwardeby, traces of which are still to be seen in the stables of Killerby Hall, two miles north of Kirkby Fleetham. Both castles were alike² in having one massive tower, with courts and outbuildings round it, all enclosed within a moat, but trusting mainly to a bog or morass, outside the moat, for any effectual defence. There was a tower built to Bedale church at about the same time for defence purposes, it having a fireplace and portcullis at the foot of the stairs. This would tie-in with the Scottish attacks which were to follow in 1315.

All that remains today is a flat raised platform, roughly circular and about 140 feet in diameter. On the north, a moat separates this portion from an outwork which would have formed the approach to the village. On the east the moat is well defined and separates the central portion from a piece of raised ground lying immediately to the east. On the south and west sides there are no traces of moat or outworks, the low-lying ground probably forming the natural bog in that direction. On the north side of the central mound remain about 45 feet of masonry, 10 feet to 15 feet in height, which formed part of the external wall of the inner fortifications. This is built of moderate-sized rubble, the facing of which has been entirely removed. To the west of this, on the opposite side of the moat, is a low portion of similar walling about 65 feet in length.

I can find no record of why the castle became derelict, perhaps it was destroyed by fire. Some of the elderly villagers believe it was destroyed by Cromwell's guns, however I do not believe this theory as, if it were true, there would surely be some record of it.

I have to wonder how many of the stone built cottages and houses are built from the remains of the castle.

¹ 'A History of Yorkshire North Riding'

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² HE Chetwynd-Stapylton,
'Preceptory At Templehurst',

The Stapeltons of Yorkshire

1897 ed 52-53