

EXCURSION—A DAY AT CARISBROOK.

From Black's Guide to the Isle of Wight 1870

[CARISBROOK is 1 m. from Newport, 8 m. from Ryde, and 6 m. from Cowes. Coaches daily from Ryde to Newport and Carisbrook; railway from Cowes to Newport, and omnibus to Carisbrook. The excursionist who leaves London early, may easily include Cowes, Newport, and Carisbrook, or Ryde, Newport, and Carisbrook, in his day's tour, by availing himself of these conveyances, though, of course, he will only be able to enjoy a cursory glance at the principal points of interest.

Inns at CARISBROOK: The Bugle, the Carisbrook Castle, etc.]

☛ We leave Newport by the HIGH STREET, pass through CASTLE HOLD, and traverse the pleasant promenade of the MALL, which brings us to the foot of Carisbrook hill. Here we may turn off to the left, and wind up a narrow lane to the CASTLE, or ascending the hill, through Carisbrook village, pay our first visit to the CHURCH; taking next the ROMAN VILLA; and lastly, the CASTLE.

CARISBROOK CHURCH,

dedicated to St. Mary, was originally attached to the priory of Carisbrook, founded here by William Fitz-Osbert (to whom William the Conqueror granted the Isle of Wight) as a cell to his Abbey of Lire, or Lyra, in Normandy. The Priory, which stood north of the church, and of which a few grey stones are the only remains—these stones having been made use of in the neighbouring farm—was leased, at the dissolution of the religious houses, to Sir James Worsley, and passed to Queen Elizabeth's famous minister, Sir Francis Walsingham, on his marriage with Sir James' son's widow (the reader must excuse this complication of possessive cases). Walsingham thriftily converted the monastic buildings to profitable uses, and to avoid the expense of repairing the chancel of the priory-church, which, by lease, he was enforced to keep in due order, he persuaded the people of Carisbrook that the church was too large for them, and, with their consent, pulled down the chancel

The CHURCH is still a very stately building, with a remarkably fine Perpendicular tower, of the same date as the towers of Gatcombe, Chale, and Godshill. The south aisle is separated from the nave, by a Transition-Norman arcade. An ancient slab, broken into two pieces, commemorates one of the monks, vicars of Carisbrook. Very noticeable is the sculpture dedicated to Lady *Dorothy Wadham*, Queen Jane Seymour's sister—the small figures in the back-ground being supposed to represent the deformed and lame whom her charity benefited. A curious rhyming inscription (in too many quatrains to be quoted here) records the merits of *William Keeling*, d. 1619, one of our early adventurers in the Eastern seas, and perpetuates the affection of his wife, who, we fancy, was its author. The allegory which surmounts the inscription is extremely quaint.

The vicarage of Carisbrook—one of the best livings in the island—was granted by Charles 1 to Queen's College, Oxon, at the instigation of Henrietta Maria (A.D. 1626).

Near the parsonage lie the ruins of

THE ROMAN VILLA,

discovered during the works necessary for the construction of some stabling, early in 1859, and preserved for the public through the exertions of C. Seeley, Esq. of Brook, E. P. Wilkins, Esq. of Newport, the Rev. E. Kell, and Mr. W. Spickernell of Carisbrook. The villa, it would seem, included an area of 120 feet by 55, and contains several apartments—the largest 40 feet by 22—a semicircular bath, hypocaust, etc. A mosaic pavement, some coins, and other relics, have, been carefully preserved. The Queen and the late Prince Consort visited this memorial of the past, and expressed their desire it should be thrown open to public examination.

CARISBROOK CASTLE

A chiefless castle, breathing stern farewells
From gray and ivied walls where Ruin greenly dwells.

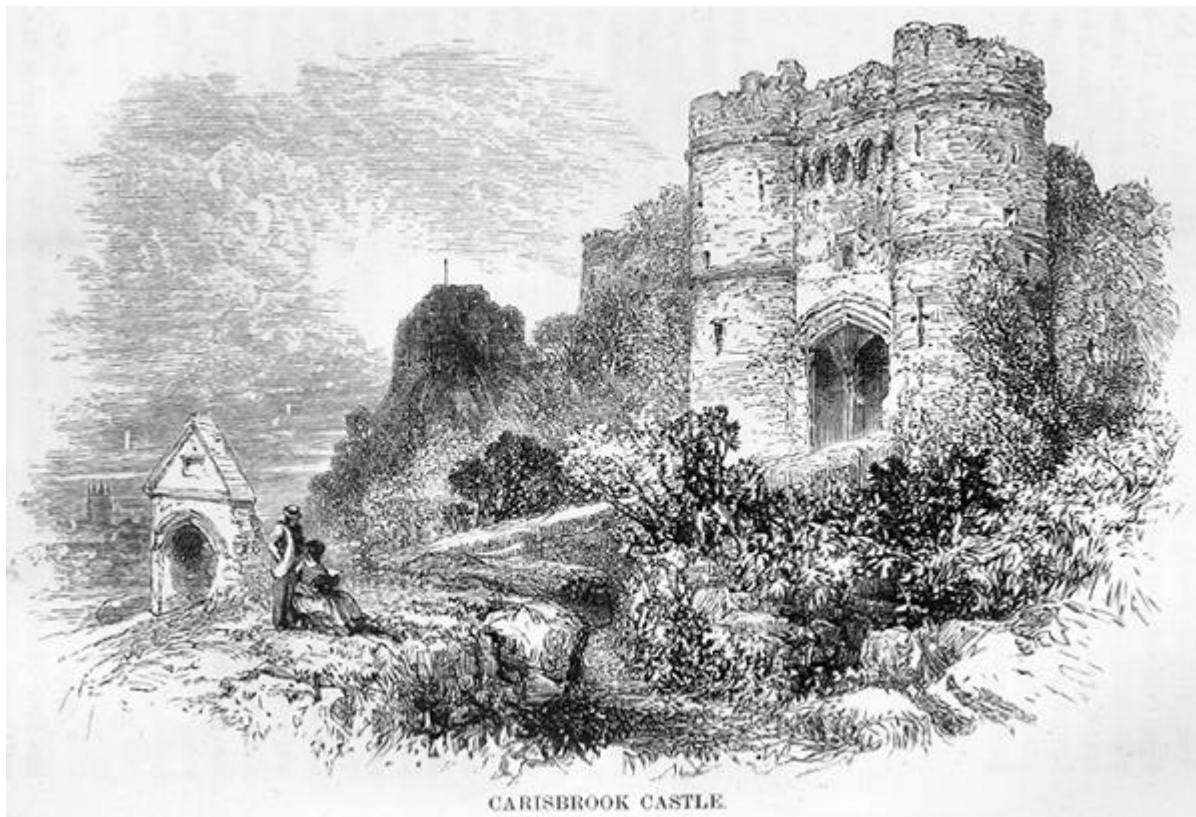
BYRON.

The different historical periods through which the castle has passed might easily be inferred from a mere cursory examination of its ruins. The *Keep* is mainly Saxon, but retains some precise indications of having been founded upon a previous Roman fortress, while there are not wanting traces of even those wild but gallant British tribes who so stoutly resisted the legions, and so often brought disgrace upon the standards of the Cæsars. The fine gateway through which we entered, with its stout machicolated towers, recalls the days of the Roses, when Edward Woodville lorded it over the Isle of Wight. The ground-plan of the castle, with its pentagonal arrangement, represents the additions to its fortifications made in the reign of Elizabeth under the direction of an Italian engineer named Genobella. The ruined chapel reminds us of

its founder, Lord Lymington, who was governor of the castle in the days of George II. A dilapidated window, with a few rusty bars, brings back the storm and shadow of the Civil Wars, being pointed out as that through which Charles I., a king, but a prisoner, vainly attempted to escape.* Thus, almost every era of English history has some association with the ruined stronghold.

** The actual window, however, was an aperture further to the east, but now blocked up, though still recognisable in the exterior of the wall nearly adjoining the only buttress on this side of the castle.*

Every ancient ruin is, as it were, a picture in many panels. Looking in this light at Carisbrook Castle, we will endeavour, though with an unskilful brush, to depict its most interesting "pictorial effects."



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The tin trade, which first brought England into connection with the rest of the civilized world, appears to have had its depot in the Isle of Wight, and the route by which it is supposed the caravans conveyed their stores across the island must have passed within a bow-shot of the present position of Carisbrook Castle.

It is probable, therefore, that a site so commanding was early recognized, in a military point of view, by the Britons, and there is reason to believe that a Celtic (or British) encampment was formed upon it.

When the Romans occupied the island their military skill soon seized upon the strategical advantages of the British camp, and they erected a fortress upon its site. In like manner, the Saxons rehabilitated—if

we may use the expression—the Roman stronghold, and undoubtedly formed the nucleus of the later feudal castle.

After the Battle of Hastings, William distributed with lavish liberality the riches of the conquered land among his followers. The Isle of Wight fell to the share of one of the most powerful, a knight ready both in council and action, William, son of Osbert, or Fitz-Osbert. This sagacious Norman repaired and enlarged the Saxon fortress, adding what is called the *basecourt* to the Saxon *keep*, and constructing strong stout walls, which included a space of an acre and a half. In the castle he had erected, he often held high revels, and, imitating the example of his royal master, he divided the surrounding country among his faithful vassals, who afterwards held their estates of “the Honour and Castle of Carisbrook.”

William Fitz-Osbert died, as became so bold a warrior, on the red battle-field, and his honours passed to his son; but Count Roger, as he was called, was neither so prudent nor so able as his father, and rebelling against King William, was cast into prison and deprived of his possessions. Thus the Castle of Carisbrook fell into the hands of the king.

King William only paid one visit to his island-fortress, and that was in an hour of peril, which vividly brought out the manly qualities of his kingly mind. His half-brother, Odo, bishop of Bayeux, half warrior, half priest, who had received from King William the earldom of Kent, and fat estates and manifold honours, during the Conqueror’s absence in Normandy (1081), collected a large and powerful following in the Isle of Wight, and prepared to quit England for Italy. The king, apprised of the ambitious Odo’s design, suddenly returned, and summoned to Carisbrook Castle his knights, and men-at-arms, and other vassals.

They met in the Royal Hall, by the shifting light of a hundred torches, which wavered and flickered merrily enough upon the glittering armour of the knightly throng. William, with moody brow and angry eye, sat in stern silence upon the dais; and when the murmur of voices was hushed, he recounted, one by one, the offences which Odo had done against him. “He has despoiled the church—he has wronged the state—has sought to seduce from their standard my soldiers who were designed to protect England. Tell me now,” he cried, “how shall I act towards such a brother I”

Odo was a prelate and a noble—wealthy, powerful, and not over-slow in his punishment of an enemy. What marvel, then, that out of all that knightly gathering not one dared raise his voice against him?

“Seize him!” shouted the Conqueror, as if resolved to construe their silence into an acknowledgment of his brother’s offences; “seize him, and let him be closely guarded!”

But not a knight laid his finger upon the prince of the church. All stood mute and aghast at the king’s wrath. With instant decision, he sprang from his seat, strode through his astonished followers, and grasped his brother’s robes.

Whereupon Odo exclaimed, “I am a priest, and a servant of the Lord! None but the Pope has the right to judge me.”

But the monarch, prepared for the crafty excuse, replied,— “I do not punish thee as a priest; but as my own vassal, and a noble, whom I myself have made.”

And Odo was surrounded by his sovereign’s guards, and in due time despatched across the seas, and imprisoned in a Norman fortress.*

* *Ordericus Vitalis, Hist. Eccles., book iv.*

Let the years roll by, and bear with them the names and deeds of many a famous knight and stout soldier, who in due succession governed the Isle of Wight, and maintained a splendid state in Carisbrook Castle. What legends, what quaint stories, what seemingly extravagant romances, its ivied stones, had they but tongues, could tell! Fair dames and gallant knights; the brawl, the fight, the wassail; love, jealousy, sorrow, ambition, hate, revenge—all have mingled their weird influences to shed a poetry and a mystery upon the ruined ramparts of Carisbrook. Like the sea, it holds a thousand treasures which it will never unbosom.

In 1377, the Castle was surrounded with the din of battle. A large body of French rovers landed on the east shore of the island; forced their way through its valleys and over its hills swept through Newport, and encamped beneath the walls of Carisbrook. Finding it too strong to be carried without regular military approaches, and being unprovided for a regular siege, they attempted to capture it by a *coup-demain*, but fell into an ambush planned by Sir Hugh Tyrrel, the governor, and were cut to pieces—not a fugitive escaping to tell the French maidens of the beautiful island-glades. So great was the slaughter, that the islanders (according to a very doubtful tradition) called the fight thus easily won the battle of *the Noddies*, or simpletons, and the spot where the chief rush of the *mêlée* took place is still called *the Noddies*, or *Node Hill*.

The Castle received a distinguished prisoner in 1397,—the Earl of Warwick, who had joined “ the Fitzalan Conspiracy” against Richard II., and was saved from the scaffold by the earnest solicitations of the Earl of Salisbury. “Earl of Warwick,” said his judges, when announcing the king’s clemency, “this sentence is very lenient, for you have merited to die as much as your compeers; but the excellent services rendered by you in times past to King Edward of blessed memory, as well on this as on the other side of the sea, have saved your life, and it is ordered that you banish yourself to the Isle of Wight, taking with you wherewithal to maintain your state as long as you live, and never quitting the island.”

Humphrey the “good” Duke of Gloucester,—Richard Duke of York who perished at Agincourt,—Edmund Duke of Somerset,—Anthony, the valiant and accomplished Lord Scales, the very mirror of knighthood, and chiefest ornament of the fourth Edward’s court,—Sir Edward Woodville, a gallant and courteous gentleman, who kept up a brave splendour at Carisbrook—and Richard Worsley, a favourite councillor of Henry the Eighth’s, were among the captains of Carisbrook Castle and lords of the Isle of Wight.

In Elizabeth’s reign, during the panic caused by the fitting out of the Spanish Armada, the Castle was repaired, strengthened, and enlarged under the directions of a famous Italian engineer, Genobella. It was once visited by James I and twice by Prince Charles, who “hunted in the parke, and killed a bucke,” and otherwise amused their idle hours during their brief excursions.

At the outset of the great Civil War it was garrisoned by a small detachment of Royalist troops under a chivalrous cavalier, Colonel Brett. The wife of the governor of the island, the Countess of Portland, and her five children, were intrusted to their loyal care, and all hoped, in the stout castle, to secure a pleasant asylum. But the inhabitants of Newport were fiercely Parliamentarian, and assisted by 400 naval auxiliaries, resolved upon seizing the Castle, and holding it for the Parliament. The besiegers were numerous, well provided with artillery, and easily supplied with stores. The garrison consisted but of a few invalided soldiers, and had but three days’ provisions. “There seemed no alternative,” says a recent writer, “but an unconditional surrender. In these critical circumstances, their only resource—but it was sufficient—was the hero-heart that beat in the bosom of the Countess. As she leapt upon the ramparts, with a lighted match in her band, admiration insensibly stirred the minds of those who gazed upon her. Englishmen revered a true Englishwoman. She spoke—clearly, firmly, without a faltering accent—’ Grant to us honourable terms; grant to these brave men safety of life and limb, and permission to go where they will—or, with my own hand, I will fire the first cannon, and will defend these walls until they bury us in their ruins!’ The besiegers acceded to her demands;’ and the Countess retired from the Castle in much honour.

Thirty years had elapsed since Prince Charles hunted the buck in Parkhurst Forest, and rested awhile within the towers of Carisbrook Castle, free, beloved, happy in the prospect of a glorious crown and a noble people’s affection, rich in personal graces and intellectual refinements,—when a king, crowned, sceptred, but powerless, he passed again under the massive archway to the solitude and sorrow of a prison! At first he was treated with all the respect due to his exalted dignity. He rode out whenever he pleased, and again hunted the deer in Parkhurst, though Colonel Hammond rode at his side. The parliament allowed him a yearly revenue of £5000, and he lived in the state apartments of the castle—long shewn as *King Charles’ Rooms*—surrounded with the ceremonials of royalty.

But he was gradually stripped of these. His chaplains and faithful attendants were removed, and others forced upon him, of whom he only knew that they were chosen by his enemies. He no longer rode abroad, no longer hunted in the forest, but was constrained to view the bright valleys and sparkling plains through the bars of his prison window. A decrepit old man was almost his sole companion.—” He is sent every morning to light my fire,” said King Charles to Philip Warwick, “and is the best companion I have had for many months.” Thus “cribb’d, cabin’d, end confined,” the unhappy monarch became careless of his attire, in which once he had so fine a taste; allowed his beard to grow; was wan and haggard,—” a gray discrowned king.”*

*My gray discrowned head,—the king’s own expression in his *“Majesty in Misery.”*

How the imprisoned king passed his days has been duly recorded by his faithful attendants. He rose early. He took moderate exercise, walking round the ramparts, or pacing to and fro the narrow bowling-green, into which Colonel Hammond had converted “the place of arms.” Of food he ate sparingly, and his drink at dinner was sack, diluted with two parts water. He chiefly employed his leisure hours in reading, writing, and meditating, or in conversation on things human and divine with those who waited about his person. The principal books he read were Bishop Andrews’ Sermons, Hooker’s Ecclesiastical Polity, Herbert’s Poems, Fairfax’s version of Tasso’s “Gierusalemme Liberata,” and Spenser’s “Faëry Queen.” In one of these books he penned a Latin distich, which vividly illustrates his peculiar cast of thought:-

“Rebus in adversis facile est contemnere vitam;
Fortiter ille facit qui miser esse potest.”

Englished.

In evil times, life we may well disdain:
He doeth bravely who can suffer pain.

Two attempts were made by the Royalists to secure the monarch's freedom, but both were ineffectual. He carried on a correspondence with his chief adherents in cipher; but the cipher was detected, and the letters were intercepted by the parliamentary leaders, who consequently were enabled to frustrate the plans contrived for his escape.

The first attempt was made on the night of the 20th of March 1648. Four or five gentlemen—Firebrace, Worsley, Newland, and Osborn—were on the watch to assist the king, whose purpose it was to force himself through his prison window, cross the court of the castle, and reach the counterscarp. A horse, ready saddled and bridled, was there waiting for him, in charge of a trusty cavalier. A ride across the island, protected by the heavy night-shadows, and at the sea-shore was a boat, well-manned, to bear him to liberty and a throne! The scheme was well-devised, but failed through the narrowness of the window, which prevented the unhappy monarch from forcing his person through it.

The second attempt was made on Sunday night, May 28th, when the king removed the bars which had impeded him on the former occasion, and might have escaped, but that the whole details of the project were known to Colonel Hammond, the governor of Carisbrook, and double guards were placed at convenient positions, to fire upon any person leaving the castle.

The king's captivity came to an end on November 29th. He was roused at the dead of night by a detachment of Roundhead soldiers, and hurried through the darkness towards Worsley's Tower, which stands upon the north-western shore of the island. Then he embarked with his few attendants, and crossed the strait to Hurst Castle.

A brief entry in the register of Carisbrook Church records the king's removal :—“The last day of November he went from Newport to Hurst Castell to prison, carried away by to (*two*) troops of horse” Another pithy passage sums up the ill-fated monarch's history :—“ In the year of our Lord God, 1649, January the 30th day, was Kinge Charles beheaded at Whitehall Gate,”—last sad scene of “that deplorable tragedy,” as Clarendon calls it, “ so much to the dishonour of the nation, and the religion professed by it, though undeservedly.”

The next prisoners in this famous castle were recommended to the humanity of their gaolers by their innocent youth as much as by their royal blood. The Princess Elizabeth and the Duke of Gloucester, the daughter and son of “ the Martyr King,” were removed here on the 16th of August 1650.

The Princess Elizabeth was “ a lady of excellent parts, great observation, and an early understanding,” fair, delicate—deformed and bowed down by an unconquerable malady. Her brother has been described by the great Clarendon as “ a prince of extraordinary hopes, both from the comeliness and gracefulness of his person, and the vivacity and vigour of his wit and understanding.” While residing at Carisbrook he was addressed as “ Master Harry,” and a yearly allowance of £1000 was granted both to him and the princess for the maintenance of a decent splendour.

But within a week after their arrival, the princess “being at bowls, a sport she much delighted in, there fell a sudden shower, and being of a sickly constitution it caused her to take cold, and the next day she complained of headach and feverish distemper, which by fits increased upon her and on the first three or four days she had the advice of Dr. Bignall, a worthy and able physician of Newport, and then care was taken by Dr. Treherne, in London, to send a physician and remedies of election [an astrological nostrum] to her. But notwithstanding the care of that honest and faithful gentleman, Anthony Mildmay, Esq., and all the art of her physicians, her disease grew upon her; and after many rare ejaculatory expressions, abundantly demonstrating her unparalleled piety, to the eternal honour of her own memory, and the astonishment of those who waited on her, she took leave of the world on Sunday the 8th September 1650.” * It is said she was found lying upon her couch, as if sleeping, her face resting upon an open Bible, her royal father's gift. She was buried in Newport church September 20, 1650.

* “*Fuller's Worthies*, ‘ vol, ii.

The young Duke of Gloucester remained a prisoner in the castle until 1652, when, by permission of Cromwell, he was released and departed into Holland.

We will now, having concluded our brief historical *resumé*, enter the castle by QUEEN ELIZABETH'S GATE (it bears a label, E.R. 1598), cross the grassy moat, and pass under the fine machicolated GATEWAY, erected by Anthony Woodville, afterwards Lord Scales, about 1464. A portcullis defends it,

and on each side it is strengthened by a round tower. The stout wooden gates are very ancient. Entering the GREAT COURT we observe on our left, the Elizabethan building occupied by Charles 1 after his first attempt to escape. Here too is the chamber in which it is said that the Princess Elizabeth breathed her last.

The main buildings (before us) were formerly the GOVERNOR'S RESIDENCE. Recent repairs, under the direction of Mr. Hardwick the architect, have brought to light some ancient features of high interest. The great staircase appears to have been converted out of an Early English CHAPEL, built by William de Vernon, 1184-1217, and the GREAT HALL (aula regia) of Baldwin de Redvers, 1135-1156, was found to have been divided into two storeys. The apartments occupied by Charles before his first attempted flight have been carefully renovated, and a good stone fireplace, and a hagioscope communicating with the chapel, will attract attention in the royal " Presence-Chamber' The "King's Bedroom" was on the upper storey.

The CHAPEL OF ST. NICHOLAS, now a most shameful ruin, was built by Lord Lymington, governor of the island, in 1738, on the site of an ancient fane, which was supposed to be Saxon in its origin.

The KEEP, occupying the site of the old Celtic stronghold of the rude fortress erected by the Saxon Wihtgar, and the stout tower of William Fitz-Osbert, is still massive and imposing. Its summit overlooks a wide reach of landscape. The mound whereon it stands is scaled by 72 broken steps. "In a ruined chamber to the left is the WELL, nearly choked with rubbish, but still deep enough to need protection, as a very ugly fall may easily be met with by the unwary" — (*Venables*). It failed during the siege of the castle by King Stephen's forces in 1150, and Baldwin de Redvers was consequently forced to surrender. That a similar catastrophe might not again occur, Count Baldwin sunk, in another part of the castle-area, the famous WELL, so great an object of attraction to wondering visitors, from whose depths (145 feet) the water is drawn up by means of an industrious donkey and a large wooden wheel. The donkeys thus distinguished have been remarkable for their longevity one died in 1798, aged 32. A successor "paid the debt of nature" in 1851, after 21 years' toil. The present labourer commenced his honourable service in 1851. The WELL-HOUSE, dating from the fifteenth century, has been well restored by Mr. Hardwick.

The visitor should conclude his examination of the castle by a stroll round its outworks, and a visit to the TILT-YARD (formerly the place of arms, and appropriated by Colonel Hammond to King Charles's use as a bowling green), and the MOUNTJOY TOWER, which strengthens the south-east angle of the ramparts.

The return to Newport should be made by the Node Hill road, passing the New Cemetery, and traversing the green slopes of Mountjoy—a summer ramble which the pedestrian will not fail to enjoy.

Behind the Cemetery, and on the way to Gatcombe, is the Roman Catholic Nunnery, erected in 1866 by the Dowager Countess of Clare, at a cost of £11,000

[The word *Carisbrook* is derived by some authorities from the Saxon fortress erected by Wihtgar— *i.e.*, *Wihtgarasburgh*; by others, from the compound *caer*, a fort, and *brook*, indicating its position open the Medina river. The parish includes an area of 7630 acres. Its population, in 1851, was 7630, including 918 soldiers at Parkhurst. The vicarage is in the patronage of the Provost and Fellows of Queen's College, Oxford, and has supremacy over the rectory of Northwood.