

# Bolingbroke Castle

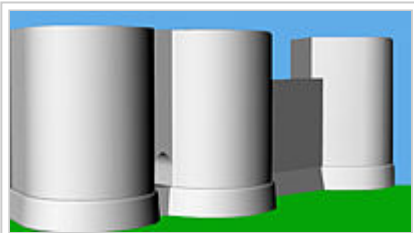
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**Bolingbroke Castle** is a ruined castle in Bolingbroke (or **Old Bolingbroke**) Lincolnshire, England.

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## Construction



Reconstruction of the north face of the castle, showing the gatehouse

Most of the castle is built of Spilsby greenstone, as are several nearby churches. The local greenstone is a limestone that proved to be porous, prone to rapid deterioration when exposed to weather and a substandard building material. The castle was constructed as an irregular

polygonal enclosure. The castle is one of the earliest examples of a uniform castle designed and built without a keep. It originally was surrounded by a large water-filled moat 31 metres (102 ft) wide. The curtain wall was up to 5 metres (16 ft) feet thick and defended by five D-shaped towers and a twin-towered gate house.

Similar to another castle built by Ranulf during the same period at Beeston in Cheshire, Bolingbroke had no inner defensive keep. The castle relied instead on thick walls and the five D shaped defensive corner towers. Some design similarities are noted with the contemporary castle at Boulogne-sur-Mer, France that was also constructed without a central donjon.

## History

### Bolingbroke Castle

Part of Lincolnshire

Bolingbroke, England



The ruined walls of Bolingbroke Castle

**Type** Enclosure castle

#### Site information

**Controlled by** Heritage Lincolnshire

**Open to the public** Yes

**Condition** Ruined

#### Site history

**Built** c. 1220

**Built by** Ranulf, Earl of Chester

**In use** 13th to 15th century

**Materials** Spilsby Greenstone  
Timber  
Earth

**Demolished** c. 1652

**Battles/wars** Battle of Winceby

**Events** Birthplace of Henry of Bolingbroke

The area was first fortified by the Saxons in the 6th or 7th century. In the 12th century the Normans built a Motte-and-bailey on a nearby hill above the settlement of Bolingbroke.<sup>[1]</sup> The present structure was founded by Ranulf, Earl of Chester, in 1220 shortly after he returned from the Fifth Crusade.<sup>[2]</sup>

Ranulf died in 1232 without a male heir, and his titles, lands and castles passed to his sisters. Following the death of Henry of Grosmont, 1st Duke of Lancaster in 1361 Bolingbroke passed through marriage into the ownership of John of Gaunt. His wife Blanche of Lancaster, daughter of Henry of Grosmont, was born at the Castle in 1345. John and Blanche's son, Henry, was also born at Bolingbroke Castle in 1367 and consequentially was known as "Henry Bolingbroke" before he became king in 1399.<sup>[3][2]</sup>

By the 15th and 16th century, the castle had fallen into disrepair although repairs were carried out during the Tudor period. In 1636 a survey found that all of the towers were effectively beyond repair.<sup>[1]</sup>

At the start of the First English Civil War, Bolingbroke was again put to use as a military fortification garrisoned by Royalist forces. In 1643 it was badly damaged in a siege during the Battle of Winceby. The following year, the castle was recaptured from the Parliamentarians but due to defeats elsewhere was relinquished again. In 1652 the castle was slighted to prevent any further use. The towers and walls were torn down and dumped into the moat.<sup>[1]</sup>

The last major structure collapsed in 1815.

## Present day

The castle, which is now a national monument, was excavated in the 1960s and 1970s. It was maintained by English Heritage up until 1995 when Heritage Lincolnshire took ownership. Much of the lower walls are still visible as are the ground floors of the towers.

In the summertime, the castle is home to numerous events including performances of Shakespeare.<sup>[4]</sup>

## See also

- Castles in Great Britain and Ireland
- List of castles in England

## References

1. "Bolingbroke Castle - a brief history". Retrieved 29 May 2009.
2. Historic England. "Bolingbroke Castle (354204)". *PastScape*. Retrieved 3 May 2013.
3. Brown & Summerson (2004)
4. "Bolingbroke Castle to host open air Shakespeare show". *Skegness Standard*. 22 June 2012. Retrieved 6 May 2013.

## Sources

- Brown, A. L.; Summerson, Henry (2004). "Henry IV (1367–1413)". *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* ((subscription or UK public library membership required)). Oxford University Press.
- Matarasso, Francois (1995). *The English Castle*. London: Cassell. p. 224. ISBN 1-84067-230-7.
- Allen Brown, R; Colvin, H M; Taylor, A J (1963). *The history of the King's Works: the Middle Ages. 2*. London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office. pp. 571–2.
- "Sylvanius Urban" (1821). "Bolingbroke Castle". *Gentleman's Magazine and Historical Review*. 91 part 2. London: John Harris & Son. p. 305. Retrieved 3 May 2013.

## External links

- Gatehouse Gazetteer record for Bolingbroke Castle (<http://www.gatehouse-gazetteer.info/English%20sites/1794.html>), containing a comprehensive bibliography
- Friends of Bolingbroke Castle (<http://www.bolingbrokecastle.com/>)
- [1] ([http://www.lincsheritage.org/promotion/historic\\_sites/site.php?key=bolingbroke](http://www.lincsheritage.org/promotion/historic_sites/site.php?key=bolingbroke)) Heritage Trust of Lincolnshire
- Friends of Bolingbroke castle. "Bolingbroke Castle". Lincolnshire county council. Retrieved 6 May 2013.



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