

Investigation Report



Investigation Site	Yeldon Castle
Investigation Date	16/08/2025
Report By	Andrew Fazekas
Team Members	Jim, Lorraine, Ben, Andy, Tisha, Lilly, Jane, Paula, Karl

Background

Yielden Castle was a twelfth-century castle located in the village of Yelden in the county of Bedfordshire, England.

Yielden Castle has also been known, or recorded as, "Yeldon Castle", "Yelden Castle", "Giielden Castle" and "Yielding Castle". It was a Motte-and-bailey castle that had two baileys. It was first mentioned in historical records in 1173 and was the stronghold of the Trailly family until the thirteenth century. The castle was in decay by 1360.

Excavations were done on the site in 1881 and 1882. A thirteenth-century stone curtain was found at that time. Today, it is little more than a grassed-over earthworks mound, though some remains can be seen. It is a Scheduled Monument. (Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yielden_Castle)

The Treilly or Trailly family held Yelden in 1086 from overlord Geoffrey de Montbray, Bishop of Coutances, a friend of William I who had fought with him at the Battle of Hastings. There is some doubt about whether the Traillys holdings ever amounted to a barony but they included lands in Yelden, Chellington, Hinwick, Roxton, Turvey, Holcot, Biddenham, Northill and Southill. The castle, their powerbase, stands on the south bank of the River Til in the east of the parish. The typical mound and enclosure (motte and bailey respectively) had walls encircling them and a tower on the mound or motte. An inquisition of 1361 makes no mention of the castle merely saying that the manor house was in ruins, so by that date clearly the castle was no longer functioning as such.

Excavations on the motte in 1882 revealed the robbed-out foundations of a substantial stone keep or tower. The eastern side of the motte descends into a broad ditch which continues around the bailey on the western side of the motte. This ditch varies between 15 and 25 metres wide and averages 1.5 metres deep.

The bailey was originally enclosed by a continuous bank, which now survives to a height of 1.5 to 2 metres along the southern and southeastern arms, and as a slight earthwork elsewhere. The northern section probably supported a timber palisade. Excavations in the bailey in 1881 exposed stone from demolished structures and uncovered foundations of a retaining wall on the inside of the rampart. Associated with this wall, in the southwest corner of the bailey, lay the base of a large circular structure, which was considered to be a bastion, or fortified tower.

The second bailey lies to the north west of the motte, separated by the northern arm of the ditch, and is thought to belong to a slightly later phase in the development of the castle. The bailey area is roughly triangular, with maximum dimensions of about 110 metres east to west and 70 metres north to south. A further high bank or rampart, measuring up to 14 metres across and 2 metres high, skirts the north eastern and western sides of this bailey. This is accompanied on the north-eastern side by a large ditch, 10 metres across. The eastern end of the ditch joins the earlier ditch near the motte.

A dry depression is located in the northern corner of the bailey. This feature measures 25 metres by 8 metres and is thought to represent a small fishpond.

The western ditch is thought to have been formed from the original course of the River Til but has been considerably altered in both medieval and modern times. The earlier changes, contemporary with the occupation of the site, include a widening of the southern part to form a large fishpond, adjacent to the western bailey. A small mound or island located near the dam at the southern end of the pond was investigated in 1882, and found to retain the stone foundations of a medieval dovecote. A tithe map of 1842 [ref: MAT54] shows the River Til to have been diverted away from the western ditch and pond, and lying between the eastern bank and the edge of the High Street. However, this channel was infilled around 1950, and a new course dug along the former route within the base of the fishpond and the west side of the northern bailey ditch.

The development of the site from early military to later manorial use is illustrated by an arrangement of six rectangular paddocks aligned along the eastern side of the castle. (Source: <https://bedsarchives.bedford.gov.uk/CommunityHistories/Yelden/YeldenCastle.aspx>)

The castle is mentioned in the Northamptonshire Pipe Rolls for 1173-74 regarding the cost of the knights in the castle. By 1360-61 the castle was abandoned and is recorded as having "fallen intirely to decay". (Source: https://virtual-library.culturalservices.net/bedfordshire/vlib/0.digitised_resources/yeldon_timeline.htm)

Volume III of The Victoria County History for Bedfordshire was published in 1912 and gives a history of Yelden Manor. Domesday Book tells us that Yelden was held by Geoffrey de Montbray, Bishop of Coutances. His tenant was Geoffrey de Treilly or Trailly. Treilly is a small town in Normandy not far from Coutances. The de Traillys held significant lands in Bedfordshire but Yelden castle suggests that this was their main base, at least for the first few decades. One of the Traillys married Albreda, sister of Walter Espec, founder of Warden Abbey, in 1158. The family were commonly said to have held a barony, though this may not have been true in the fullest sense of the word.

Walter de Trailly died in 1360 at which point the Manor of Yelden comprised a dovecote, an orchard, 660 acres of arable land, meadow and pasture and a windmill all, with the profits of the manorial court, worth £13/16/8 per annum. Sometime before 1400 John de Trailly alienated the manor to Edmund Hampden.

In 1520 Yelden was in the hands of Barbara Hampden. She later married Edmund Smith. They had one daughter, Anne, who married William Paulet. Paulet's granddaughter Elizabeth married Oliver Saint John, 1st Earl of Bolingbroke.

The manor remained in the hands of the Saint John family until at least 1722. By 1728, however, it was held by Sir Jeremiah Vanacker Sambrook, MP for Bedford from 1730 to 1740. On his death in 1740 Yelden passed to his three sisters, Elizabeth Monoux, Judith Sambrook and Susannah Crawley. By 1801 the Crawley family held the greater part of the manor was were described as lords of the manor in the early 20th century. In the 1920s a succession of Law of Property Acts abolished manors in all but name. (Source: <https://bedsarchives.bedford.gov.uk/CommunityHistories/Yelden/TheManorOfYelden.aspx#:~:text=Walter%20de%20Trailly%20died%20in,manors%20in%20all%20but%20name.>)

Investigation Begins

Location 1 – Top of Yeldon Motte

Present – Jim, Lorraine, Ben, Andy, Tisha, Lilly, Jane, Paula, Karl

Equipment used – Cat balls, Audio recorders, video cameras, photography cameras, EMF box and K2 metres, Rem Pod.

Time 21:21 – 22:17 hours

Prior to commencing the first vigil, Tisha and Ben notice a black shadow towards the bottom of the Motte. A cat ball activates behind where Lorraine was sitting. Further cat balls activate a little further down the hill from where the group are sat.

Vigil 1 – Spirit Talker app and Ovilus

SECURITY (Jane's app)

21:27 hours - Cat ball activates behind Karl

GRAY (Ovilus)

HUMAN (Ovilus)

21:28 hours – Cat ball behind call activates again behind Karl.

SUPPER (Ovilus)

DESCRIBE (Jane's app)

HELLO NEW FRIENDS (Jane's app)

SUGGESTED (Ovilus)

21:31 – no members of the team are picking anything up that may be spiritual or paranormal.

Cat ball activates again behind Karl.

DAMNATION (Jane's app)

RABBIT (Ovilus)

CONFIDENCE (Jane's app)

21:33 – cat balls in front and behind of Karl and Paula activate

HUG (Ovilus)

NO PLEASE LEAVE (a Jane's pp) (as Ben and Andy jest about having a campfire where we were sat)

EMMA (Jane's app)

Paula also has her app running (Ghost Hunting app) and pulls up the name Ryan. She states she has relatives called Ryan and EMMA

CAN YOU STAY A WHILE (Jane's app)

PLUTO (Ovilus)

TORTURE (Ovilus)

OBSERVE (Ovilus)

ROGER (Jane's app)

HUMAN (Ovilus)

SINISTER (Jane's app)

SEE (Ovilus)

MARGARIE (Jane's app)

SUPPER (Ovilus)

WHOLE (Ovilus)

FILTER (Paulas app)

I ONCE LIVED HERE (Jane's app)

UNDER (Ovilus)

MANUFACTURA (Paulas app)

YOU ARE A BLESSING (Jane's app)

RABBIT (Ovilus)

21:44 - EMF meters close to the team activate.

PORT (Ovilus)

HIDING IN THE DARK (Jane's app)

LEAVE RIGHT NOW (Jane's app)

TOWARDS (Paula's app)

YANK (Paula's app)

I'M UPET (Jane's app)

21:47 - Lilly feels a chill up her back and along her spine.

APPLE (Ovilus)

CIRCLE (Paula's app)

KID (Jane's app)

I'M AT PEACE (Jane's app)

ANGEL (Jane's app)

JONES (Jane's app)

TAKE (Paula's app)

WORM (Ovilus)

BRACELET (Paula's app)

SHOULD (Ovilus)

21:51 – Janes EMF metre activates

HASTE (Ovilus)

NEWS (Ovilus)

DEE (Ovilus)

EAT (Ovilus)

ENOUGH (Ovilus)

PLACIBO (Ovilus)

HIGHWAY (Ovilus)

YEAR (Jane's app)

PAUL (Ovilus)

LIGHT (Ovilus)

LAY (Ovilus)

21:54 – cat ball activates between Paula and Karl. Another cat ball activates behind Andy.

JET (Paula's app)

DEplete (Ovilus)

BASEMENT (Ovilus)

DEEP (Ovilus)

SQUARE (Paula's app)

FOLIAGE (Ovilus)

COMMUNICATE (Jane's app)

21:58 – no one still picking anything spiritual or paranormal up. Benn suggests moving into the moat below but agrees to a further 10 minutes on the Motte.

EXTENDED (Paula's app)

JENIE (Ovilus)

MORE (Paula's app)

JURY (Paula's app)

TASTE (Paula's app)

I'M ONLY 8 (Jane's app)

ONE (Paula's app)

RODGER (Paula's app)

CO-OPERATE (Paula's app)

COARSE (Ovilus)

COMPANY (Ovilus)

TISSUE (Paula's app)

STAY HERE (Jane's app)

DIED (Paula's app)

MOMENT (Paula's app)

MOMENT (Ovilus)

MUMMY (Ovilus)

HOW CAN WE HELP (Jane's app)

SOLO (Ovilus)

KIND (Ovilus)

SAMANTHA (Paula's app)

WE'RE NOT AT PEACE (Jane's app)

ALWAYS (Jane's app)

DOWN (Ovilus)

MY CHILDHOOD (Jane's app) – just prior to this Tisha was talking about the night sky in her childhood.

ITEM (Paula's app)

TRAIL (Ovilus)

LIBERAL (Paula's app)

GRAVE (Jane's app)

ADJUST (Ovilus)

PROPERTY (Ovilus)

DRAG (Paula's app)

STORY (Ovilus)

GREEN (Ovilus)

WE CAN TALK (Jane's app)

HE DOESN'T LIKE YOU (Jane's app)

TALKING (Paula's app)

LICK (Ovilus)

DON'T FORGET ME (Paula's app)

YOU SHOULD COME BACK (Jane's app)

VIDEO (Ovilus)

HARD (Paula's app)

BATH (Ovilus)

22:17 hours end vigil.

Location 2 – Yieldon Moat

Present – Jim, Lorraine, Ben, Andy, Tisha, Lilly, Jane, Paula, Karl

Equipment used – Cat balls, Audio recorders, video cameras, photography cameras, EMF box and K2 metres, Rem Pod.

Time 22:38 – hours

Vigil 2 Silent vigil.

22:43 – Tisha senses a very strong character called Arthur or Albert, and a wife called Mary. He is big in character and physically for his time. He is connected to the land.

He feels a menacing character but that is his job, not who he really is. Tisha doesn't sense his wife. She believes he has come down from the North and was linked to when the castle was there. He was in armour.

Tisha feels that he is aware as to why we are there but feels that this is his home and he looks after the area. (Motion ball activates behind Karl)

Tisha does not feel that he died at the castle but feels he has a duty to protect it.

Tisha doesn't feel that any blood was shed at the location.

Tisha doesn't feel that spirits are attracted to the area.

22:50 – cat ball activation between Paula and Karl

22:56 – cat ball activation between Paula and Karl.

Vigil 2 – Spirit Box commences at 22:57. Jane is on the headphones.

22:58 – Tisha becomes aware of a girl named Helen and asks it to speak to us.

Andy asks how many spirits are around us at the moment.

Jim asks if anyone wants to talk to us.

Andy asks if a Roger is with us.

Paula asks if someone wants hour help.

Lorraine asks what year it is.

22:59 - Jane states she hears nothing but noise. She hears nothing at all coming through.

23:02 – Tisha feels nothing come through now.

23:04 – Jane states still nothing coming through on the spirit box but white noise.

The vigil ends at 23:05 and the team start to watch the sky instead.

Post Investigation

Jim and Lorraine did not feel that there was anything paranormal at this location on this visit. Nothing was captured through any EVP or photography.

Research suggest that the castle was initial fortified prior to becoming a 'manor', where the manor ceased to exist. It is report that this could have been due to a siege but no records exist to suggest this is the case.

Andy overall I did not pick up anything this time