

**Wanderings of
An Antiquary.
Pevensey Castle.**



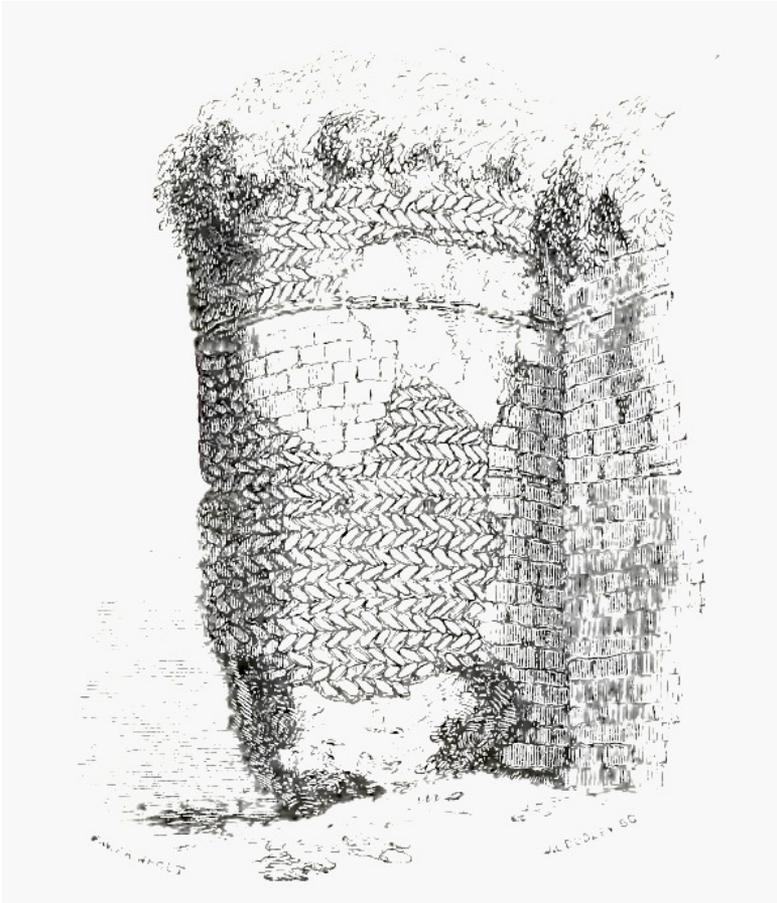
**By Thomas Wright
F.S.A.**

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IV. —Pevensey Castle.



**Roman Tower, with Norman Super
Structure**

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THE coast districts of Sussex were rendered important in ancient times by their productions, as well as by their position, which was favourable for communication with Gaul. They were separated from the rest of the island by a wide belt of very thick forest extending from Kent westward into Hampshire, known to the Romans by the name of *Silva Anderidce*, and to the Saxons by that of *Andredes-weald* and *Andredes-leah*. This name it either took from, or gave to, an important town on the coast named *Anderida* or *Portus Anderidse* fortified place, and its townsmen brave

We have no notice in the Roman writers of the history of this town, further than that its name is entered in the *Itineraries*. When the Saxon invaders landed in AD. 477, under their leader *Ælla*, and his three sons *Cymen*, *Wlencing*, and *Cissa*, they found this town, which they called *Andredes-ceaster*, a very strongly fortified place and its townsmen brave and skilful warriors. It was not till 491, fourteen years after their arrival, that *Ælla* and his son *Cissa* obtained possession of it, and then they were so incensed at the long and obstinate defence of its inhabitants, that they slew all that dwelt therein, so that not a single Briton was there left. Such is the account given by the *Anglo-Saxon chronicle*.

The wars of *Ælla* and the fate of the Roman *Anderida* appear to have been long celebrated in Saxon song, for the old historian *Henry of Huntingdon*, who made great use of such popular materials, has given us from tradition a more circumstantial account of the attack upon this important town. He tells us that *Ælla* led a very large force to the siege of this well-fortified town (*urbem munitissimam*). The Britons assembled “like bees,” and harassed the besiegers by day and by night but the more the Saxons suffered from their attacks the fiercer they became, and they made continual but unavailing efforts to force their way into the place. But whenever they made their assaults on the walls, the Britons attacked them behind with arrows and darts so hotly, that they left the walls, and turned upon them.

WANDERINGS OF AN ANTIQUARY - Pevensey Castle

Then the Britons, quicker in their movements, made good their retreat into the forest, but no sooner did the besiegers approach the walls, than they were at their backs again. In this manner the Saxons were long embarrassed, and lost an immense number of men, until at length they divided their army into two parts, and while one was occupied in the attack on the town, the other was posted in the rear to hold the Britons in check.

Then the citizens, reduced to starvation, and no longer possessing the strength to resist their assailants, were all devoured by the sword, with their women and children, so that not one escaped. And because the strangers had thus suffered so much hurt, they destroyed the town, so that it was never afterwards rebuilt; and the deserted ruins only of what appears to have been once a most noble city are shown to travellers as they pass.[1]

It is evident from this that the town and historians have been led to suppose, so utterly destroyed that not a trace was left to mark its position. Any one who knows what Roman walls are will at once understand the improbability of such a result. As the historian just quoted, who lived himself in the earlier part of the twelfth century, intimates, its massive fortifications remained standing, and they enclosed the ruins of streets and houses which, as all the inhabitants had perished, there were none who possessed that attachment to the place which would induce them to rebuild. But as the town itself remained thus deserted, and its floors and foundations became deeper and deeper buried in the soil, which always collects in such situations, the Saxons gradually formed settlements around. It had been an important sea-port, and the situation naturally attracted fishermen and others whose vocation or taste connected them with the wide ocean while the ruins of the ancient town furnished ready materials for building.

To the east of the old town some Saxon chief whose name was Peofn appears to have taken up his residence, and a village was formed around him which, with its bay, became known by the name of Peofenes-*ea*, or Pevenes-*ea*, the Water of Peofn. It is evident that this site was chosen on account of its proximity to the sea. On the western or land side of the ancient town, on the side of the ancient military road or street, another settlement was formed, no doubt

WANDERINGS OF AN ANTIQUARY - Pevensey Castle
subsequent to the other, because it was called for distinction-sake
the West-ham, or the manor on the west.

These two settlements gradually increased in magnitude and importance, until they became incorporated and were made a branch of the cinque ports. We have no guide to the period at which Peofn settled here, but it must have been remote, for we learn that as early as the year 792 Peofenes-*ea* was given by its proprietor, who was then the Earl Berhtwald, to the abbey of St. Denis at Paris. It continued to be a sea-port of importance; in the eleventh century, especially, it seems to have been a common resort of ships, and it was here that, on the 28th of September, 1066, William of Normandy landed with that powerful army with which in the fatal battle of Hastings he expelled the Saxon dynasty from the throne of England.

At this time Pevenes-*ae* was of sufficient importance to possess a mint and, the whole district having been given by the Conqueror to his half-brother Robert, Count of Mortaigne, that nobleman, perceiving at once the importance of the position for one whose interests lay between England and Normandy, determined to make here one of his principal castles. The area of the Roman town was then probably a mere rough ground, the foundation-walls of the Roman houses being already buried in the accumulated earth, and the circuit of the massive walls of ancient Anderida enclosing a space abundantly sufficient for what the Normans called the outer ballium of their castles.

Count Robert chose the south-eastern extremity of this area, where the ground was much higher than the rest (perhaps raised artificially), to erect his Norman fortress. This fortress was long celebrated in English history but; as the sea gradually receded from the port, both castle and town lost their importance.

Both Pevensey and West-ham, though still preserving their old corporate rights and character, were again reduced to mere villages, but between them stand the remains of Anderida; and those majestic walls, which had witnessed for many a long year the Roman occupation of our island, and which had presented an insurmountable obstacle to the furious attacks of the Saxon

invaders, still stand in many parts more perfect than the ruins of the Norman castle. The ancient name of Anderida has been entirely lost, and from the earlier of the two Saxon settlements the whole site has received the name of Pevensey Castle.

There are few ruins in England which better deserve a visit than those of Pevensey Castle, and they are now easy of access, for the visitor may reach them with almost equal facility by railway from Hastings, or from Brighton (by way of Lewes), or from London. From the metropolis, with a return ticket, he may, if he likes, proceed thither by an early train in the morning, and return at night and there is a good inn between the Pevensey station and the castle, at which he may obtain refreshments. The Brighton Railway, which is the one he must take, is one of the most picturesque lines near London, presenting to the traveller in his rapid course a fair sample of the varied scenery of Surrey and Sussex. Between the stations of Reigate and Horley, the traveller enters upon the weald district, the ancient Silva Anderidce and as he passes through it, he obtains many fine views of wild, irregular scenery, bounded by the distant heights of the forest, many of which are still thickly clothed in wood. At the Hayward's Heath station, in the middle of this district, he turns off from the Brighton line, and a few miles further he leaves the weald, and enters upon the equally striking scenery of the Sussex downs, the road becoming more and more picturesque as he approaches the town of Lewes.

Lewes is a pretty and interesting country town, occupying an elevation in a pass between two ridges of the downs. The rail-road was conducted in a tunnel right underneath the town, much to the discomfort of some of the inhabitants who happened to have wells and pumps, which, from the position of the place, had been necessarily sunk deep on the line through which the tunnel passed. It is said that one good housewife, rising in the morning and as usual lowering the bucket into her well to obtain the water necessary for household purposes, was not a little amazed at bringing it up with chalk rubbish shovelled in by the railway excavators below.

The town of Lewes strikes us by the cleanness of its streets, which is, indeed, a usual characteristic of a town built thus upon a hill. It still presents a few specimens of old street architecture, though, as

in so many other places, the greater part of the remains of this description have been cleared away before the progress of modern improvements. There are a few other old buildings worthy of remark, but the two objects of most interest to the antiquarian visitor are the ruins of the castle and the remains of the celebrated priory of St. Pancras. The site of the latter was partially excavated during the formation of the railway, and many interesting objects were discovered, of which a description will be found in Mr. Lower's excellent little "*Hand-book for Lewes.*" Some interesting architectural remains have also been uncovered in the private gardens which here abut on the railway.

The stranger should not pass hence without entering the neighbouring church of St. John in Southover, and visiting the beautiful little chapel erected by a native and self-taught architect over the remains of the princess Gundrada. The remains of Lewes castle consist chiefly of the gateway, and of the keep or citadel, erected on the top of a lofty mound of earth, which has every appearance of being artificial. Such mounds are often found in the earlier castles, but I cannot help suspecting that they are in all cases of much greater antiquity than the castle itself; when a vast heap of earth like this had been piled up it would hardly require less than a century or two to give it the solidity necessary for supporting a ponderous mass of masonry like a Norman keep.

The buildings on the summit of this very lofty mound here consisted of four octagonal towers with curtain walls two only of the towers remain, and one of them is now tenanted by the Sussex Archaeological Society, and fitted up as a museum. There are several good and zealous antiquaries in the town of Lewes and its neighbourhood, among whom it is only necessary to mention the well known name of Mark Anthony Lower. Its antiquities are not the only attraction of Lewes, for few localities afford finer walks and rides than those furnished by the picturesque downs that immediately surround it.

These various attractions are sufficient to detain the visitor who has time at his command for a day or two at least at Lewes. After leaving the town the railway pursues its course through some of the finest

scenery of the South Downs. At first the traveller has high ground stretching to some distance from Lewes on the left, and; on the right a long and elevated ridge extending to Alfriston. Beyond and between are lesser undulations. Then again appear the high grounds above the village of Arlington on the left, and on the other side those above Folkington and Willingdon, the commencement of the hilly country which extends to Beachy Head. Further on he passes through a hilly district, but less bold, until he arrives at the edge of the flat country known as Pevensey Level, and the time-worn walls of Pevensey Castle rise boldly before him. Many of the hills we have passed are crowned with numerous barrows, or sepulchral mounds, some of them Anglo-Saxon, and others proved by their contents to be of that description which are usually termed Romano-British.

Many of them were opened some years ago by Dr. Mantell, one of the best and most popular of our geologists, who was for some years resident at Lewes, and many of the articles found in them are in his collection-now in the British Museum.

It is to Dr. Mantell also that we owe the knowledge of the geological wonders of this interesting district. It is interesting to the naturalist as the favourite resort of the wheatear (*syloiacænante*), which is caught in great numbers by the shepherds, and sold as a delicacy, and as producing a considerable variety of rare plants. The grass, growing on a thin crust of mould formed on the chalk, gives a peculiar flavour to the South-down mutton. The valleys, or combs, are in many instances very picturesque.

When I visited Pevensey in the spring of the present year I was particularly struck with the abundance and magnitude of the primroses in the green lanes in that neighbourhood. The mound of Lewes Castle was also covered with them, many of them here being of a beautiful pale pink colour. Pevensey Castle, with its adjoining villages, is situated on slightly elevated ground, on the edge of the level already mentioned.

The walls of the castle are seen from the railway station, from which we pass by a short cross road into the larger road which leads us up to the noble entrance towers, the decuman gate of ancient Anderida.

The Roman masonry is here wonderfully perfect although it has been exposed to the changes of a great part of two thousand years, the mark of the trowel is still visible on the mortar, and many of the facing stones look as fresh as if they had been cut yesterday.

The opening between these two towers is now twenty-seven feet, which is too large for the entrance to a strongly-fortified town, but it was perhaps narrowed by stone buildings which have been long cleared away, or this wide opening was only the approach to the narrower gateway into the town. In fact, the visitor no sooner passes this magnificent pile of masonry, than he perceives distinctly by the unevenness of the ground that he is treading upon a complicated mass of foundations of walls which most probably supported the gateway of the town, and the result of a careful excavation of this spot would no doubt be extremely interesting.

The stranger to Pevensey who would appreciate the grandeur of the Roman remains must not at first enter the area, but pursue the road to the left which runs outside under the northern wall and its massive slid towers. Immediately to the east of the grand entrance a modern house has been built, the pigsties and other outhouses of which conceal a large portion of the wall and the first tower from view.

After passing this encumbrance the wall becomes visible, and assumes a bold appearance. Beyond the third tower from the gateway there is a large breach, and the wall disappears altogether for some yards. Here Mr. Roach Smith, examining the foundations from the interior, suspected the existence of a postern gate, and an excavation undertaken at his expense shewed that his experienced eye had not been deceived. The form of this entrance, as it has been but very partially exposed to view, deserves special observation.

The tower next after this breach in the wall is in a good state of preservation, and is remarkable from the circumstance that it bears on its summit a Norman superstructure, no doubt intended as a watch tower, for it commands a very extensive view of the principal approaches to this important fortress. The accompanying sketch was taken from the west, looking towards Pevensey.

There is a striking-contrast between the rough masonry of the Norman superstructure and the workmanlike finish of the Roman building below. The latter is here extremely well defined. It consists of a regular facing of squared stones, with the usual bonding courses of bricks (a very peculiar characteristic of Roman masonry in this country). Here and there the place of bricks is supplied by flag or Horsham stone.

The interior is filled up with irregular materials thrown among liquid mortar, and the latter (in which we observe at once the mixture of pounded tile (so peculiar to the Roman mortar) has become harder than the stone itself. The wall and towers remain for the most part of their original height, which is somewhat more than twenty feet, and they are about ten feet in thickness.

It is recorded that at the beginning of the last century, it being necessary to make a watercourse under part of the Roman wall, it was found to be built upon piles, covered with large planks of wood. The Roman walls in this country are usually built thus on wooden planks laid on the surface of the ground but here the piles seem to have been required by the nature of the ground. The towers, which, as it has been already intimated, consist of a solid mass of masonry, are built into the mass of the wall.

This is a peculiarity in the remains at Pevensey, for in most other instances of Roman walls, as at Richborough in Kent, Burgh Castle in Norfolk, &c. the towers have been built after the wall itself, apparently as supports. At Burgh Castle (the Gariannonum of the Romans), the towers are actually detached from the wall.

The towers at Pevensey are peculiar in form their plan consists of a square and a semi-circle attached to it. The facing of the walls and towers is in many places dilapidated, especially the lower parts of the towers, which have in several instances been protected by the recent erection of props, one of which is shewn in the preceding cut. In some places breaches in the facing of the wall and towers have evidently been the result of violence, and they speak probably of some of the early sieges to which this fortress was exposed.

These breaches are sometimes filled up with repairs of an early date. The most remarkable example of such repairs is shewn in the tower of which the accompanying sketch was made by Mr. Fairholt. Here a large breach has been made in the facing of the tower, which has been repaired with that peculiar style of masonry called herring-bone work, consisting of large flat stones placed in a zigzag pattern, as shewn in our sketch.

This style of masonry was much used by the Romans themselves, but it was also employed by Saxons and Normans to a later period; and, though one would fain see in the sample here figured a memorial; of the last struggle of Anderida, yet it must be confessed that there is nothing about it to guide us in fixing its date. Immediately after this tower a modern arched gateway has been cut through the wall, by which the interior area is entered from the Pevensey side.

Mr. Lower and Mr. Figg, who are both excellent judges, and have had good opportunity for examination, are of opinion that there was originally a postern gate here, but if so it has been completely destroyed in making the modern arch.

The wall hence continues its course, with one intervening tower, to the eastern corner, where the Norman castle stands on what seems to have been a lofty artificial mound. It is in the gardens here adjacent to the exterior of the Roman wall and on the slope of the mound, where we enter the Norman castle, that the greatest number of Roman coins has been found.

A portion of another Roman tower, and some fragments of Roman wall, are found on the south-eastern exterior of the Norman castle, after which there are no traces of wall for a considerable distance along the south side of the enclosure. This and the breach on the northern side seem to be the work of comparatively modern times, for had they existed when the Norman or Edwardian defences were built, they would no doubt have been filled up by walls of that period. On the southern side the wall stood on the edge of rather a steep bank, which seems to have been gradually wearing away till the wall was undermined and fell. The Roman walls enclose an area of about

ten acres. The ground within rises gradually, but very perceptibly, from the west and north, and it is evidently very much raised above its original level. Indeed, it is quite apparent from the unevenness of the surface, that, underneath, the whole area is full of the remains of buildings, and a careful excavation would no doubt lay open the floors and streets of the ancient Roman town as they were left after the massacre of its inhabitants by the enraged warriors of Ælla and Cissa.

We trust the time is not far distant when this excavation will be commenced, under careful direction, for there are few spots calculated to furnish discoveries which will throw more light on the condition and history of our island at this remote period. I believe that the proprietor has given permission to excavate, and nothing is wanting but the necessary funds.

The form of the Roman town of Anderida, as defined by its walls, was an irregular oval, extending nearly east and west. Its walls and towers are shown by the black line in the accompanying plan, reduced from an actual survey by Mr. William Figg, of Lewes, where **1** indicates the grand entrance, or decuman gate; **2**, the postern discovered by Mr. Roach Smith; and **3**, the modern entrance into the castle from the village of Pevensey. **4** is the spot in the neighbourhood of which the Roman coins are chiefly found. Along the southern side, at **7**, a considerable portion of the walls has disappeared. (See plan on next page)

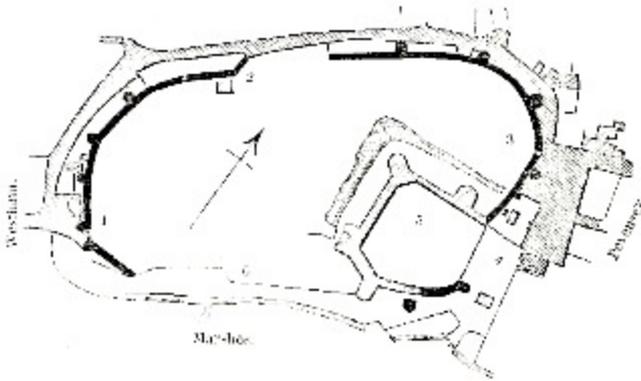
The Norman castle occupies nearly an acre and a half of the interior area, at the south-eastern corner (**5** in the plan). It forms an irregular pentagon, round a large mound, so that the small interior court is much higher than the ground outside. The buildings are in a very ruinous state but three of the towers are standing, and the gateway, flanked by two towers, is sufficiently preserved to enable us to understand its plan and arrangement. This latter faces as near as may be the grand entrance of the Roman enclosure, and it is quite evident that in this, and more especially in the external forms of the towers round the castle, the medieval architect imitated the Roman models before him.

I speak of it as the Norman castle, but there are many peculiarities in its architecture which render it doubtful how much of it belongs to the Norman period and how much to a later date. This castle is separated from the rest of the area by a moat, over which a drawbridge led to the entrance. The little court within the castle, which has a deep well in the middle, is a favourite place for pic-nic parties, and the highest part affords an extensive view of the country around, reaching southward over the bay.

On the outside of the decuman gate the village of Westham, with its fine church, extends on both sides of the road, and presents some good examples of old timber houses. This was no doubt the great road leading from Anderida to the Roman towns along the southern coast of Britain. It had been deserted at an early period, for after leaving Westham its direct course is now covered by corn-fields and pastures.

When I visited Pevensey in the spring of this year, in company with Mr. Lower and another zealous antiquary of Lewes, Mr. W. Figg, and Mr. E. B. Price, it was partly with the object of examining this road. We easily traced its course along the ploughed fields by a broad line of large stones and mortar mixed among the soil, which had been torn up by the ploughshare.

On digging, we found the road itself about a foot underground, paved with large round stones from the sea-beach, set in mortar. This road points directly towards Lewes, and I believe has been traced almost to that town, very near which it must have passed. Coins and other antiquities found at Lewes in considerable numbers seem to prove that that town must have been a Roman settlement of some kind, and some antiquaries have conjectured that it was the town or station mentioned in the geography of the anonymous writer of Ravenna under the name of Mutuantonis, or, according to the reading of one manuscript, Mantuantonis, as being somewhere in the same part of the island as Anderida. It must be stated, however, that this can be taken only as a very vague conjecture, for no information whatever is given as to the exact position of Mutuantonis.



NOTES

1) This I believe to be the meaning of the words of Henry of Huntingdon, *ita urbem destruxerunt, quod nunquam postea reedificata est, locus tantum quasi nobilissime urbis Iranseunlibus osieuditur desolatns*. Hen. Hunt. Hist. lib. ii. p. 312.

Extracted The Gentleman's Magazine 1852 p 133 – 144

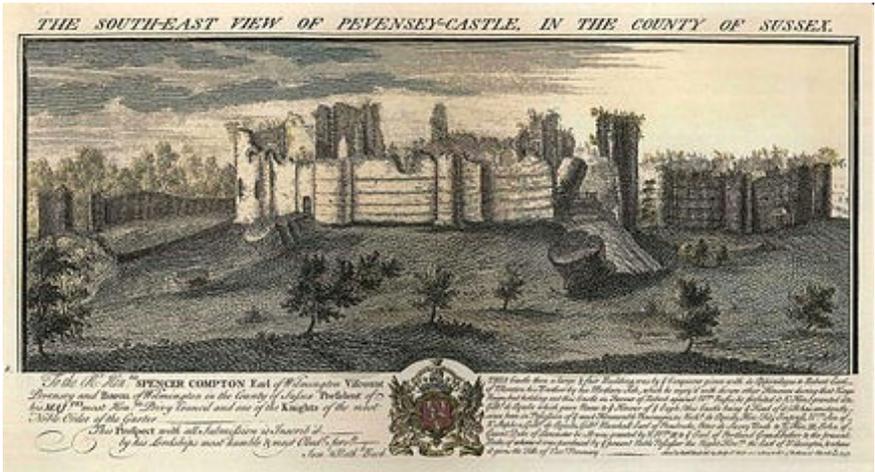
An addition remark from the following edition GM

The excavations at Pevensey Castle, or Anderida, the commencement of which we announced in our Magazine for September, have been proceeding during the past month under the superintendence of Mr. Lower and Mr. Roach Smith, supported, we are happy to add, by an encouraging subscription. list. The ground-plan of the chief or western entrance has been laid open two entrances, on the, north and south sides, have been discovered and the great wall, contrary to the general opinion, is proved to have been carried along on the low ground facing the sea. Pg 493 1852





Pevensey Castle as it is today Today



Samuel and Nathaniel Buck's depiction of the ruined bailey in 1737



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