

# SITE OF STAMFORD CASTLE

The modern (1970s) buildings rising up the hill to your left are standing on the site of Stamford's medieval castle, virtually all of which has now disappeared.

Until the 1930s much of the site was open ground and it would still have been possible to appreciate the layout and structure of the original castle, with its grass mound ("motte") at the crest of the slope. But the last remains were obliterated in 1936 when the mound was levelled to make way for the present bus station; and in the 1970s when the entire area of the former bailey was developed for housing as Warrenne Keep – incidentally making possible the major archaeological excavation of the site that is the source of all the information we have today about the castle's structure, shown hatched on the plan below.

## ST PETER'S GREEN

Immediately behind the castle site at the entrance to the present bus station there is a green, tree-covered, open space standing somewhat above the present street level. This was the site of **St Peter's Church**. Not visible from here, it can be reached on foot up St Peter's Vale.

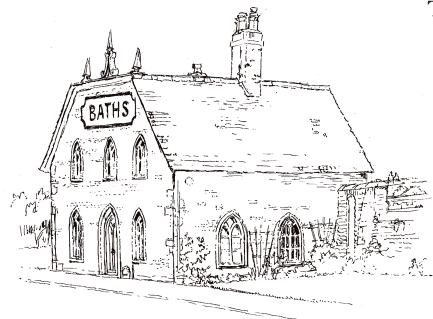
Pre-dating the Conquest, St Peter's was possibly the first church in Stamford and the only one mentioned by name in the Domesday Book (1086). Little is known of its history. Perhaps built originally to serve property in the area belonging to the ancient royal estate of Roteland – modern Rutland – it was later associated with the Norman castle next door. The church eventually became redundant after the Reformation. The parish was united with All Saints' in the mid-16th century and the church demolished.



St Peter's Green and St Peter's Hill

## BATH ROW and KING'S MILL

**Bath Row** takes its name from the former public Bath House, the first building along the road to your left. A public bath house had originally been established there by four local surgeons in 1722 when sanitary conditions in much of the town were dire.



Bath Row

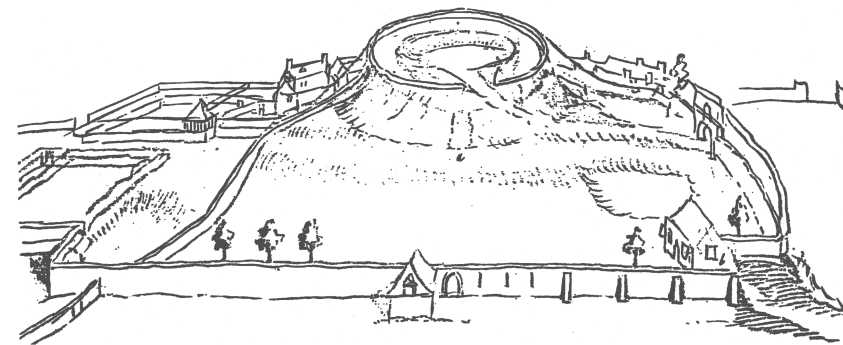
The present building, now a private house, was built in 1823 by the Marquis of Exeter in the Gothic style of the period.

The open area along the river at the eastern (right) end of Bath Row was a dreadful slum area of cramped housing, small workshops and warehouses until it was cleared in the 1950s. It now serves as a car park.



King's Mill

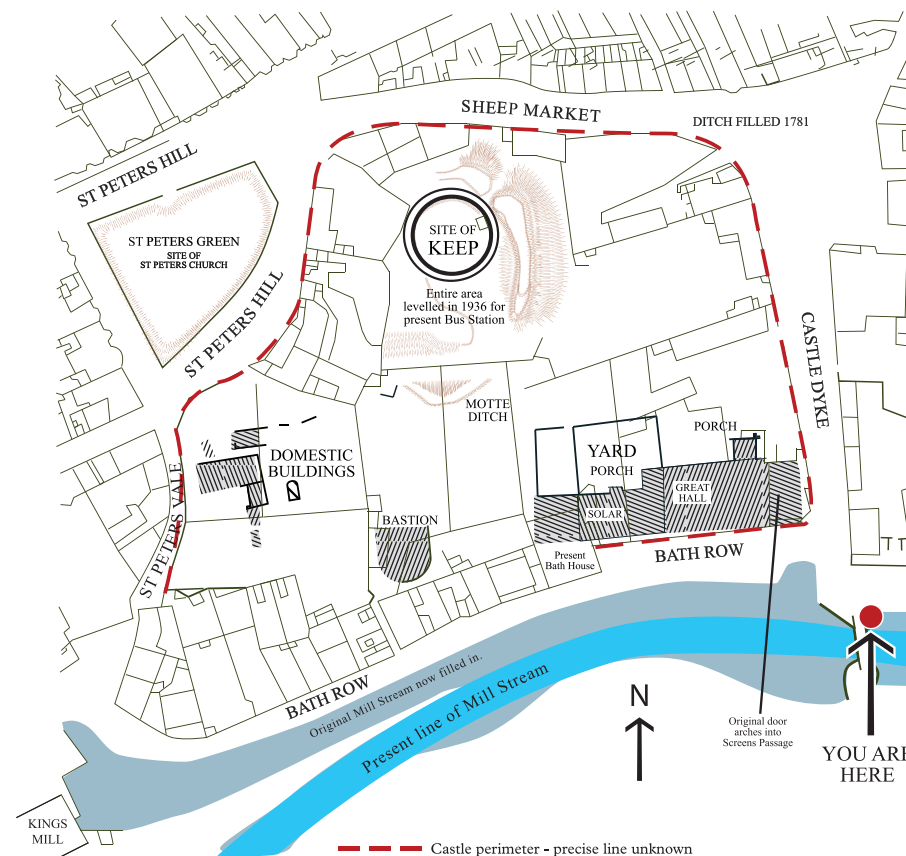
**King's Mill** stands at the western (left) end of Bath Row. Formerly known as North Mill it is probably one mentioned in the Domesday Book. The present building dates from around 1640 when the mill stream was newly cut. Later enlarged, it has been converted; part is now an educational centre and part private housing.



Sketch of Stamford Castle by Wm. Stukeley 1735  
(Spalding Gentlemen's Society)

Had you been standing here 800 years ago you would have seen the southern section of the castle's outer defensive wall (the "bailey" wall) running along the bank of the former mill stream (much of it now filled in to form the present Bath Row) and making the sharp turn northwards up the edge of a ditch where the present road – appropriately called Castle Dyke – leads uphill into Sheepmarket and the town centre.

Immediately behind this bailey wall you would have seen the roofs of various accommodation buildings – a great hall and solar, a chapel, domestic quarters, stores and stables. Behind these buildings, partly cultivated ground sloped upwards to a substantial earth mound ("motte") at the crest of the hill, topped with a circular stone tower or "keep".



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## CASTLE REMAINS

The Normans established a castle here very early on to command this important crossing of the River Welland. It saw serious action on three occasions during the feudal turmoil of the mid-12th century and it continued in use throughout the 13th century. But by the early 14th century, with more settled times, it had outlived its usefulness. A survey in 1340 described it as "old and walls decayed...all of no value". The structures were quarried for other buildings.

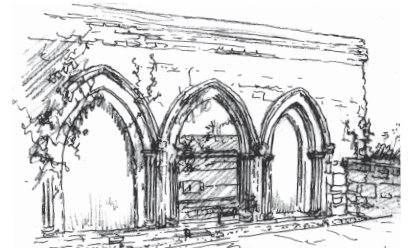


Exterior view of  
door openings with conjectural  
outline of great hall.



13th Century stone head  
recovered from the Castle site  
(now in Stamford Museum)

By 1600 all that remained was a small hall, used as an occasional law court (a "leet" court). This had been built incorporating part of the original wall of the gabled east end of the castle's 13th century great hall.



Interior view from great hall showing  
Early English arches with mouldings

The three arched door openings (shown above and to the right), with their Early English style mouldings on the interior side, were presumably part of the screens passage. The arches have been conserved within the short section of freestanding wall you can see immediately opposite at the corner of Bath Row and Castle Dyke. The wooden door in the centre arch is an early one though not original; it was removed in the 1930s from an ancient doorway in the High Street.

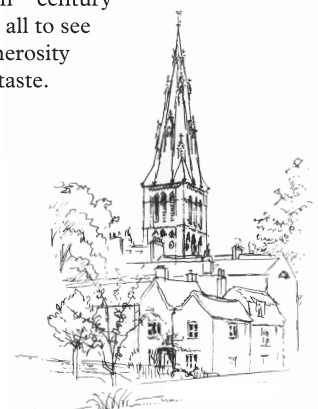
## CHURCH TOWERS AND SPIRES

Stamford is a town of medieval church towers and spires, two of which can be seen from here.

Look ahead up Castle Dyke and you see the tower and spire of **All Saints'** rising above the roof tops, tall, slender and elegant. Built in the 1470-80s by the brothers John (d.1475) and William (d.1489) Browne, successful wool merchants, as part of a major refurbishment and "modernisation" of the original 13th century church, it proclaims for all to see their wealth, status, generosity and architectural good taste.



Move a few yards to your right and you will be able to see the top of **St Mary's** broach spire. This is a massive stone structure rising to 162 feet, added in the early 14th century to the already imposing tower of the existing early 13th century church. Tower and spire together are way out of scale in relation to the church itself and how much more so to the original surrounding hovels. They still dominate the entrance to the town from the south and remain a superb monument to the astonishing prowess and self confidence of the medieval builders.



Drawings by Jean de Gale