

Offton Castle History

- ❖ King Offa, King of the Mercians who died in the year 796 is reputed to have built Offton Castle.

The site of the former fortification is situated high above the village and an extensive 360° view over the countryside made it a prime site for such a building with the purpose of defending property around it. The earthwork still visible is impressive, showing a plateau about 50 m by 50 m totally surrounded by a moat, the width of each ditch being around 15 m. It is likely that the castle itself was a fortification of wooden construction, but any evidence has long gone. Nowadays the plateau is populated with trees and shrubbery.



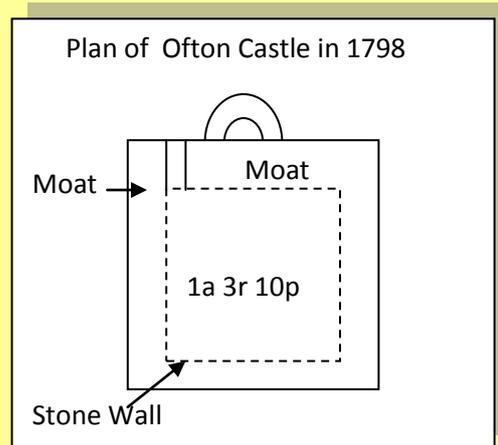
Although any connection with King Offa cannot be substantiated by documents or archaeological evidence the name itself is often the reason for such an assumption.

- ❖ The Domesday Book (compiled in 1087) records a place called Pileburgh without indicating its exact location, merely placing it 'between Flowton and Offton and Somersham'. This could well have been Offton Castle.
In 1066 Dot held 'Pileburgha' and in 1086 this was given to Roger de Obturville.
- ❖ In Jocelin of Brakelond's accounts of 1173- 1202 there is a mention of a Geoffrey de Ambli or Amberley of Somersham having a castle able to defend against Milden, Old Newton, and Lindsey.

- ❖ In 1532 there is a dispute between the King and Lord Wentworth who had taken away stone from the Offton castle site to build his own hall in Nettlestead.
- ❖ The travel writer Kirby noted in 1735 that ruins of a castle were visible.
- ❖ Stevenson-Fitch showed an illustration of the mound in his collections of 1806. He showed a stone wall all around the inner mound.

Illustration from Suffolk Record Office Ref. No.: **HD480/14**

William Stevenson Fitch Collection of Suffolk Illustrations 27 vols. 1792 - 1859



As Transcribed from original document

- ❖ 13th century documents show that Roger Loveday was lord of the manor. He was holding assize courts for the king. When Roger died in 1287 his son Richard was only 5 years old. So when in 1306 Richard claimed his inheritance he stated as proof of age that he was born and baptised at Offton. 4 daughters inherited the estate and John Bohun, who married one of the daughters, acquired all the parts from the other heirs. In 1327 John de Bohun paid the highest taxes in the village and was lord of the manor of Offton Castle. He was also the Earl of Northampton. The arms of Humphrey de Bohun are in 2 of the windows of Offton Church in their original glass. It is not likely that the Bohuns actually lived in Offton as they were in the service of the King and had more property in the West Country. They might have visited their estate here at times though. Offton manor was even then amalgamated with the manor of Elmsett.
- ❖ From the Bohuns it came into the hands of the King through marriage. He seems to have sold it to John Waddelove and it then went to the Earl of Salisbury who sold it in 1628 to the Bishop Andrewes Charities. This included Castle Farm, Elmsett Hall, and Park Farm, Somersham.

- ❖ Castle Farm in turn was bought in 1921 by Malcolm F. Fiske of Willisham Hall who continued to farm the Offton lands from there whilst renting out the Castle Farmhouse.



- ❖ Nowadays Castle Farm is in private hands and the Castle Mound is protected through English Heritage.

