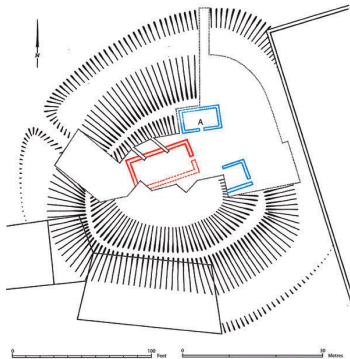


NORMAN OCCUPATION (C.1070 – 1140 AD)

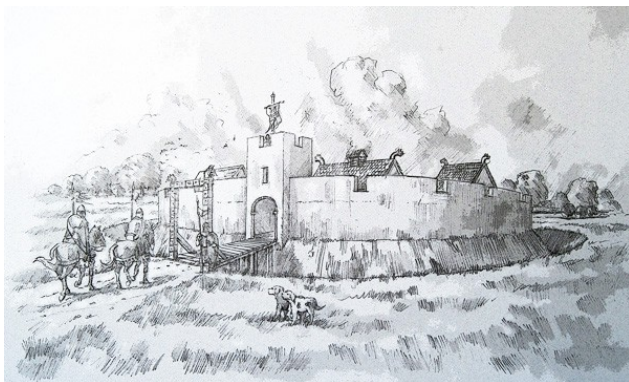
After the Norman conquest in 1066 contemporary records show that the Thegn's lands were given to Ghilo de Picquigny, a Norman knight. He raised a rampart 2.5 metres high around the site, perhaps to dominate the Saxon population, but also for protection from other Normans. He demolished some of the Saxon structures but retained some stone buildings adding a new stone Hall where the Thegn's house had stood.

Later in the century new timber buildings were erected and the rampart was widened and raised by a further 1.5m. It is not clear whether this was done for Ghilo or for his son, but the cause may have been the outbreak of civil war after the death of William the Conqueror in 1087 AD.

Ghilo's son died in 1130 AD, and the excavations showed that the castle had been abandoned by around 1140 AD. The Picquigny family held extensive estates throughout the area and Sulgrave may have become redundant.



Plan showing the extent of the excavated area, the steep banks and the ditch of the Norman Castle, the re-used Saxon buildings (shown in blue) and the new Norman one (shown in red).



SULGRAVE CASTLE GREEN



PUBLIC OPEN SPACE

This little meadow adjoining the Church and the ancient Castle has been a traditional meeting place for villagers since time immemorial. It is now in public ownership and thus preserved for ever as a venue for future events, a safe haven for children's informal games or simply a tranquil corner in which to relax and enjoy the peaceful atmosphere and views of the surrounding countryside.

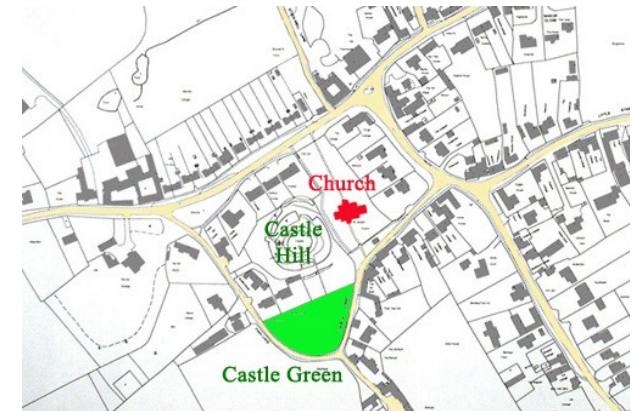
A REGISTERED VILLAGE GREEN AND SCHEDULED ANCIENT MONUMENT

Visit the village website (www.sulgrave.org) to see more pictures and to discover further information about the project and its outcomes. Sulgrave Castle Mound is privately owned but may be visited by arrangement with the owners, Mr and Mrs Pollak, Telephone: 01295 768224

SULGRAVE CASTLE

Scheduled Ancient Monument

Sulgrave Castle Mound was partially excavated six times between 1960 and 1976. This showed that the Norman Ringwork visible today had been established on top of earlier Saxon buildings. These were of manorial stature and dated from about 970 AD. Norman occupation began soon after the conquest and continued during the 11th Century. The site was abandoned by 1140 AD.



THE EXCAVATIONS

In 1960 archaeologists from Queen's University, Belfast were investigating the early development of Norman castles, and Sulgrave (one of several local "ringworks") was chosen for excavation.

Saxon buildings were discovered buried beneath the Norman earthworks, so five further excavations were carried out between 1961 and 1976.

Interim reports were produced but it was not possible to publish a full detailed Excavation Report at the time.

Recent developments

In 2005 Sulgrave Archaeology Group obtained funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund's Local Heritage Initiative to assess the finds and documents, create a complete paper and digital archive and prepare the material for publication so as to reach as wide an audience as possible.

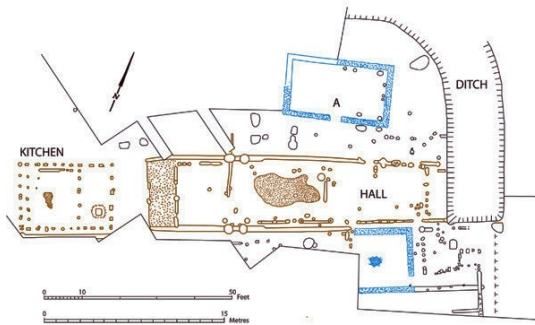
In addition to the detailed Final Excavation Report, the project includes the production of this leaflet, a pack of children's workcards for guided visits by local school parties and the deposit of copies of the archives with the Northamptonshire Records Office.

THE SAXON SETTLEMENT (C.950 – 1070 AD)

The size and layout of the Saxon buildings suggests that their owner was a Thegn – a man of local importance who was expected to possess at least 5 hides (600 acres) of land, a Chapel, a Hall and a Kitchen. The re-used Saxon doorway in the present church tower suggests that this chapel may have been where the Church now stands.

The Thegn's imposing buildings would have been surrounded by workshops and stables. This whole area would have been enclosed by a boundary wall and ditch, with a large gateway to emphasise the Thegn's high status.

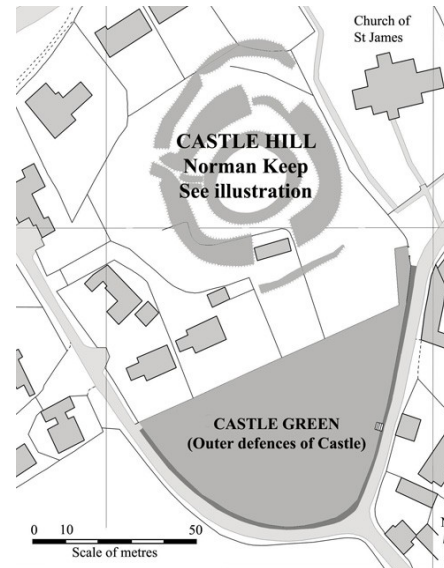
Throughout the late 10th Century and early 11th Century this part of England was subject to Viking raids. This could account for an unfinished attempt to fortify the site against attack.



Plan showing the extent of the excavated area and the Saxon buildings and boundary ditch discovered beneath the Norman Castle mound. The Thegn's original timber house and kitchen (shown in brown). Later stone buildings (shown in blue). See also photographs of walls and doorway.



CASTLE HILL



Sulgrave Castle Ancient Monument

The sunken lane around the south side of Castle Green may have been part of the outer defences of the Norman Castle of Ghilo de Picquigny, who arrived with William the Conqueror in 1066.



Doorway leading from the courtyard into the Saxon stone building A (coloured blue on the plans). The stonework above the door collapsed when the wooden lintel rotted away.

THE FINDS

A large quantity of broken pottery and animal bones was recovered. Pottery shards can help to date the archaeological layers, and fragments of animal bones reveal changes in the inhabitants' diet. 'Small finds' such as the coins and personal items shown below indicate the status and lifestyle of the inhabitants.



Illustrations of a few of the many artefacts recovered during the excavations are shown above, including a brooch derived from the Agnus Dei Saxon coinage, a small bone comb, a coin of Æthelred II (AD 978-1016), glass beads, a bone whistle, a bone awl and a pair of iron spring shears (not all at the same scale).



Excavations in progress, 1976 (above): A segment of the north side of the 'ringwork' has been carefully removed. The outline and earth layers of the rampart bank can be seen, as can the stone walls of the Saxon building that was buried inside it. Modern cottages in Magpie Road are visible in the background.