

**Organisation:** Wessex Archaeology

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**Topic:** Sheffield Castle: an innovative approach to outreach



### **Background**

In 2018 Wessex Archaeology Sheffield office undertook archaeological works at Sheffield Castle. The work was commissioned by Sheffield City Council in order to determine the level of preservation of the remains of Sheffield's medieval castle and later industrial development. The castle was demolished in the 17th and 18th centuries, and a 19th-century steelworks and the 20th-century Castle Market were constructed in its place. A team from Wessex Archaeology's Sheffield office managed by Milica Rajic excavated 11 evaluation trenches and 21 boreholes over nine weeks, working in tandem with the Friends of Sheffield Castle and the University of Sheffield. We provided opportunities for four students and 350 volunteers to assist in the work on site and in post-excavation.

In August 2020, the reporting on the eleven trenches of the archaeological evaluation and borehole survey were completed. The full report is available for free download from our [website](#) and a publication – a book written together with the University of Sheffield Professor John Moreland and University of York Professor Dawn Hadley – has been published by White Rose University Press.

### **Innovative approaches to outreach: archaeology as a play**

Outreach formed a major part of the evaluation project. Sheffield Castle is prominent in the imagination of the Sheffield public and this enthusiasm was addressed by a raft of community engagements. These included daily volunteer placements, five with the on-site excavation team and five with the finds processing team at Wessex Archaeology's offices in Sheffield. Additional on-site volunteering from local heritage groups and schools was facilitated. A total of 40 weekend and weekday site tours was provided, bookable by the public and for schools, youth groups, local history groups and other stakeholders. Over 200 public talks were given during and after the on-site works. Wessex Archaeology sought social media interactions (Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, blog and vlog) which, on average, engaged more than 1200 people per week. We have also answered over 20,000 enquiries and have written a theatre play (see next page for details). The play was written (out of my personal necessity to do something different) for Parson Cross Church of England Primary School, year 2 (teacher Miss V Curtis) and was performed on four different stages in autumn and winter 2018. One of the stages was at Showroom Cinema, where the play was performed in the large auditorium (over 100 attendees) during South Yorkshire Archaeology Day in December 2018.

SHEFFIELD CASTLE

OR

A STORY ABOUT WILL, TOM, LIZ, GEORGE AND MARY

M Rajic

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**Characters in order of appearance:**

**Narrator** – sitting on the proscenium for the duration of the play

**Several archaeologists** – in yellow vis vests and hard hats

**Mili** – Chief on-site archaeologist

**Visitors** – in blue vis vests and hard hats

**Will** – William de Lovetot, Anglo Norman baron, founder of Sheffield town and the owner of the first Sheffield castle (early 13thC).

**Two medieval lads/later two George's cronies/bullies** – medieval architects and town planners, equivalent of today's builders.../later two bullies

**Tom** – Thomas de Furnival, another Sheffield medieval celebrity, the owner of the stone-built Sheffield castle (late C13th)

**George** – George Talbot, 6th Earl of Shrewsbury, richest of the rich, all sorts of bling and property owner, his mate is Elizabeth I, he is a jailor of Mary Queen of Scots. Careful player and annoyed by all three women. Especially by Mary and Liz and the way they talk to each other. A lot of responsibility and baggage to deal with (mid to late 16th C).

**Liz** – Elizabeth I, Queen of England, at first REALLY annoyed, later very angry with Mary (late 16th early 17th C)

**Mary** – Mary Queen of Scots, ex queen but very much still demanding all sorts, not happy with Elizabeth. At all! Gets into deep, deep trouble...

**Bob(s) the Builder(s)** – several, wearing yellow hard hats

**Scene 1:**

Present day archaeological site. Dry, sunny day, large machines (diggers, dumpers) in the background. In foreground archaeologists in yellow hardhats and yellow vis-vests digging with shovels, etc. Some wheel barrows on site. Some large stones on the side too. Some archaeologists are on their knees trowelling. Busy archaeological site. A group of visitors comes in (from stage right wing blue vis-vests and hard hats) led by Mili.

**Mili** (waving while walking and pointing at the entire stage/archaeological site): this is our site, we have opened 11 trenches and are working hard.

*[Everyone stops at one of the 'trenches' with archaeologists in]*

**Mili:** Do come closer, come closer... and here we have found the remains of the Sheffield Castle...

**Visitors:** Ohhhhhh.... (whispering, murmur... etc).

**Narrator:** Once upon a time there was a guy called William. He had a strange but a nice surname – De Lovetot. He was a Norman and he came to Sheffield to build a castle.

**Scene 2:**

'Old times.' Countryside in the background, rolling hills and trees.

**Will** (walks on site from the left, scratching his beard, looks around, seems like he's thinking, waves his hands like he is measuring the space, makes a few long strides): two yards, three elbows... hmmm... should be enough space...

*[Two lads with old looking maps come on stage]*

**First lad:** Hey, Will, look, we think it is safe to build a castle here. Look (pointing on the map and the stage surrounding) there are two rivers and here is a wee hill. It is perfect.

**Second lad:** It will be no problem. We have built castles before.

*[First lad looks at the second lad in 'are you sure?' way]*

**Will:** Ok, ok. I would really like it to be here. But how much is this going to cost?

**Second lad:** It will be a very good price. For you, I mean.

**First lad:** Oh yes, like.... for you. Maybe £5 and a few pennies?

**Second lad:** And a jug of ale! Deal?

*[Second lad extends his hand to shake Will's.]*

**Will:** Deal!

*[They shake hands. The two lads leave the scene one way. Will starts leaving the other way but remembers something. Stops, turns around and shouts after the lads.]*

**Will:** Hey you two! Hold on... Does that include a hospital, a bridge, a mill and a park? Hey! Hey!!!

*[Will runs after the lads off the stage.]*

**Narrator:** So this chap, William De Lovetot, got his castle and a hospital. He bridged the River Don and built the first town mill. He established the first planned Sheffield town. However, Will's castle got destroyed in a large fire. But not long after that the crown gave a permission for a first stone castle to be built in Sheffield. This was done by Thomas de Furnival.

### **Scene 3:**

Inside a stone built medieval castle.

**Tom** (sitting in a large comfortable armchair in the middle of the scene, with a glass of wine in his hand): Oh, I love, I just love this place. It is such a nice castle. I've spent a fortune, but I don't mind. It is a solid stone structure. It will last forever! For-e-ver! It is the largest building in the North; it is almost the largest in the country. The neighbours are so jealous (he giggles). Oh I love it.

*[While Tom is saying this, three men arrive on stage. One of them is George – George Talbot, Sixth Earl of Shrewsbury. The other two are his cronies, two bullies.]*

**George** (forcefully): Right, ok, we take it from here...

**Tom** (still sitting in his chair): Errr, sorry?

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**George:** I am going to take this castle from now. Ok?

**Tom:** Err, no not really. This castle is mine.

**George:** Well it is not anymore. See the date (shows a piece of paper). You are well past the best-before date.

**Tom:** What do you mean?? (stands up)

**George:** I mean we are now in the 16th century, and you are a bit off... (giggles in an unfriendly way, looks at the two bullies, they giggle too)

**Tom** (smells his armpits): Off?! I had a wash this morning...

**George** (rolls his eyes up to heaven and sighs deeply): Some people... I have to explain everything, so they understand... Ok mate, you are from the 13th century and this is the 16th century. How are you still here is anybody's guess. So.... scoot.

**Tom:** Well, but... this is my house, what do you mean it is the 16th century...?

**Bully one:** He means you are dead anyway and if you are not, you will be if you don't move.

**Bully two** (into Tom's face): Boo!

*[Tom screams and runs off the stage]*

**George** (while sitting into Tom's chair): Phew! That was annoying.

*[His cronies/two bullies sit on each side by his legs, like his pets.]*

**Narrator:** That is George Talbot, Sixth Earl of the rich Shrewsbury family and the richest of all of them. He made Sheffield castle massive and famous. He also built the Manor house just over the deer park. Oh, and he was the best mate of Liz, Elizabeth I, the Queen.

**Liz** (enters the scene, in a nice dress and with a crown on her head; she looks slightly distressed): George...

**George:** Oh, hi Liz. Are you ok?

**Liz:** Not really...

**George:** Why? What is going on?

**Liz:** Mary... Mary is just... impossible!

**George:** Again?

**Liz:** Yes! All the time!

**George:** What is it now?

Appendix 3.8b

**Liz:** Oh George, would you please talk to her, she is just.... Well... she is just, just...

oh, I am annoyed with her!

**George:** Ok, calm down, calm down... I'll speak to her. You two (addressing the two bullies) go get Mary.

*[Bullies go]*

**George** (comforting Liz): It will be ok. Don't worry. She is a bit... wild... but I'll talk to her...

*[Mary enters the scene, two bullies behind her]*

**Mary:** Hi George! (Looks at Liz and rolls her eyes.) You wanted to see me?

**George:** Hi Mary... Yes... Just to see how are you doing?

**Mary:** Happy, fine, thank you.

**Liz:** Of course you are happy! You are in my dress!

**Mary:** Well, it looks better on me!

**Liz:** No, it doesn't!

**Mary:** Yes, it does!

**Liz:** No, it does not!

**George:** (between them) Hold on, hold on, ladies.

**Liz:** And, and, she wanted my shoes!

**Mary:** Mhm....

**Liz:** And she wanted my other lovely dress!!

**Mary:** Mhm...

**Liz:** And she wanted my crown!!!

**Mary:** Cos it's mine...

**Liz:** It so is not!

**Mary:** It is!

**Liz:** It is not! George, do something about this!

sigs (to his cronies): Go and get some cake!

**Bully one:** What kind of cake?

**George:** Victorian sponge!

**Bully two:** But that is a different century!

**George:** Whatever it takes!

Appendix 3.8b

*[Two bullies leave. George, Liz and Mary are still on stage. George in the middle holding his head. Liz and Mary with their backs to each other.]*

**Scene 4:**

Cross section through history.

**Narrator:** You see... that cake didn't really help... Liz got really, really angry with Mary, to the point that George had to lock Mary up in his room and then later take her away and.... unfortunately, Mary was no more (gestures decapitation).

But a lot of other things happen later with the castle. Like... it got destroyed and then it was turned into a bowling green and the place where people eat ice-cream... and then later became a place where the steel was made. Oh, and some knives and forks too!

*[While the narrator is saying this behind, on the scene there is bowling, and ice cream- and candy floss-eating going on. Followed by people in dungarees and hard hats carrying large hammers and forks and spoons.]*

**Narrator:** And then all this became archaeology to be found by Mili, her archaeologists and several Bobs the Builders.

*[At this point Mili, archaeologists and several Bobs are on the stage bowing. Followed by other actors and actresses. And at the end the narrator.]*

THE END