

## Caldwall Tower

This medieval tower in Kidderminster is all that remains of the castle of Sir Ralph Clare, a leading Royalist in Worcestershire during the English Civil War, and the first high steward of Kidderminster.

Caldwell Tower is found in Castle Road in Kidderminster. The building has a colourful history, with close connections to the Gunpowder Plot and to Geoffrey Chaucer.

The Tower is also known as Caldwell Tower and was built on the site of an earlier castle or fortified manor house. The origins of the settlement are not known but it is believed to be the manor of Sudwael which is listed in the Domesday Book (1086). The first reference to Caldwell dates from 1249 and thereafter little is known about the site until 1335 when it is in the hands of Sir Hugh Cokesey. It was he who upgraded the site into a small castle which was in existence no later than 1347. The fortification was well sited in a strong defensive position adjacent to a bend in the River Stour which provided protection on the east and north sides. The landward approaches were probably marshland. The castle layout was similar to Stokesay castle with a courtyard and towers at each corner.

Caldwall Tower itself dates from the late 15<sup>th</sup> or early 16<sup>th</sup> century and was a partial rebuild for whatever structure originally stood in its place. The three storey tower was built of red sandstone and consisted of a vaulted ground which was only accessible through an external door, a vaulted first floor and chamber above.

The timeline for the site

It is now owned by Worcestershire businessman Richard Davies and his wife. In 2005 on the 400 anniversary of the Gunpowder Plot he held a Civic Banquet in the Tower under the eyes of Robert Wyntour.

736 AD - Caldwell may have been where Earl Cynberht built a monastery.

1068 AD - The Domesday book records a manor called "Suuduuale" which was almost certainly Caldwell.

1249 AD - Sub manor of Caldwell established.

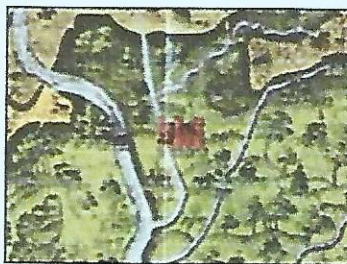
1335 AD - Sir Hugh Cokeseey takes over the manor.

1347 AD - The castle is finished.

1374 and 1384 AD - Sir Walter Cokeseey becomes MP for Worcestershire.

1407 - Sir John Phelip takes over the castle and manor.

Sir John Phelip - A close friend of Henry V - of Agincourt and Shakespearean fame. He went to fight for the King in Normandy and died there - of dysentery - shortly after the siege of Harfleur in 1425. He is buried in Kidderminster Parish church.



Tapestry showing Coldwall Castle

1498 - The Cokeseey line dies out and the Wyntour family - of Gunpowder Plot fame or notoriety - inherit the estate.

Thomas and Robert Wyntour were both involved in the Gunpowder Plot of 1605. Robert and Thomas were both hung, drawn and quartered after the plot failed.



Robert Wyntour

1589 - The estate is sold to Francis Clare.

1642 and 1651 - Sir Ralph Clare takes part in the defence of Worcester, fighting for the Royalist side.

Sir Ralph Clare was a devoted servant of Charles I and Charles II. He was jailed after the Battle of Worcester, and later banished. After the restoration he came back to the county, and is buried near Kidderminster.

1690 They built a three storey brick building connected to the tower on the north west side.

1777 - The Jeffries brothers take over the estate

1864 - George Turton takes over the estate.

1897 - George Turton dies and the estate is bought by the Corporation of Kidderminster.



Sir Ralph Clare

1897 - 1998 - The estate was variously a school of domestic science, government offices, the municipal fire station and an air raid protection headquarters.

1961- Brick mansion demolished, leaving only the tower.

1990- The virtually derelict estate was bought by Richard and Nely Davies.

It was also the home of the granddaughter of Canterbury Tales author Geoffrey Chaucer at one time.

# CALDWALL TOWER



Caldwall Tower is the sole surviving section of a small castle which was built by the Cokesay family in the fourteenth century. The tower was later heavily modified and around 1690 it was incorporated into a new house. This was demolished in the mid-twentieth century leaving the tower as a standalone entity.

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