



CASTLE DIARY

For Joan Clayton, who despite her best efforts
failed to turn her son into a pageboy

R.P.

For William

C.R.

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CASTLE DIARY

The Journal of
Tobias Burgess, Page

RICHARD PLATT.

illuminated by CHRIS RIDDELL



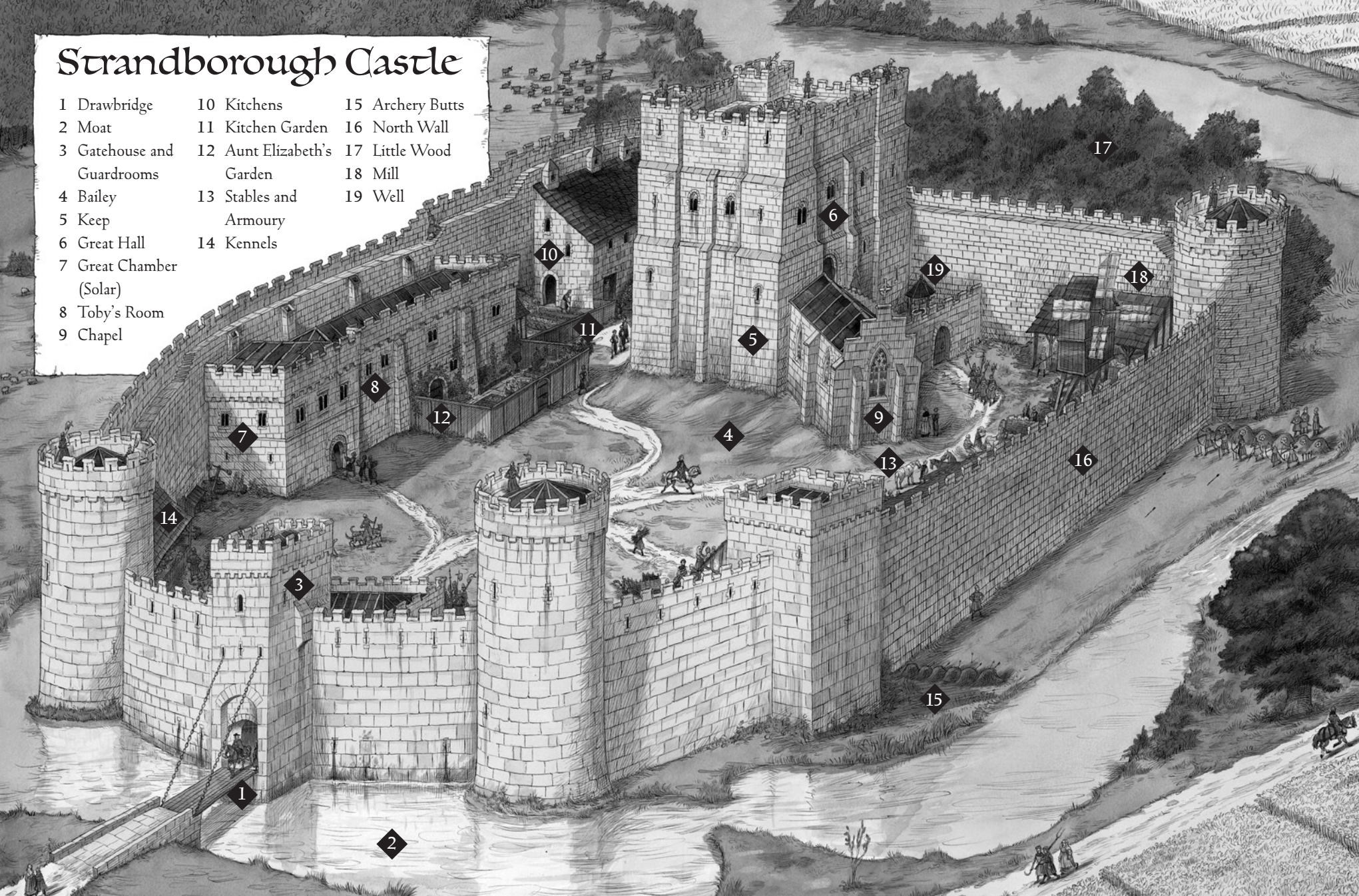
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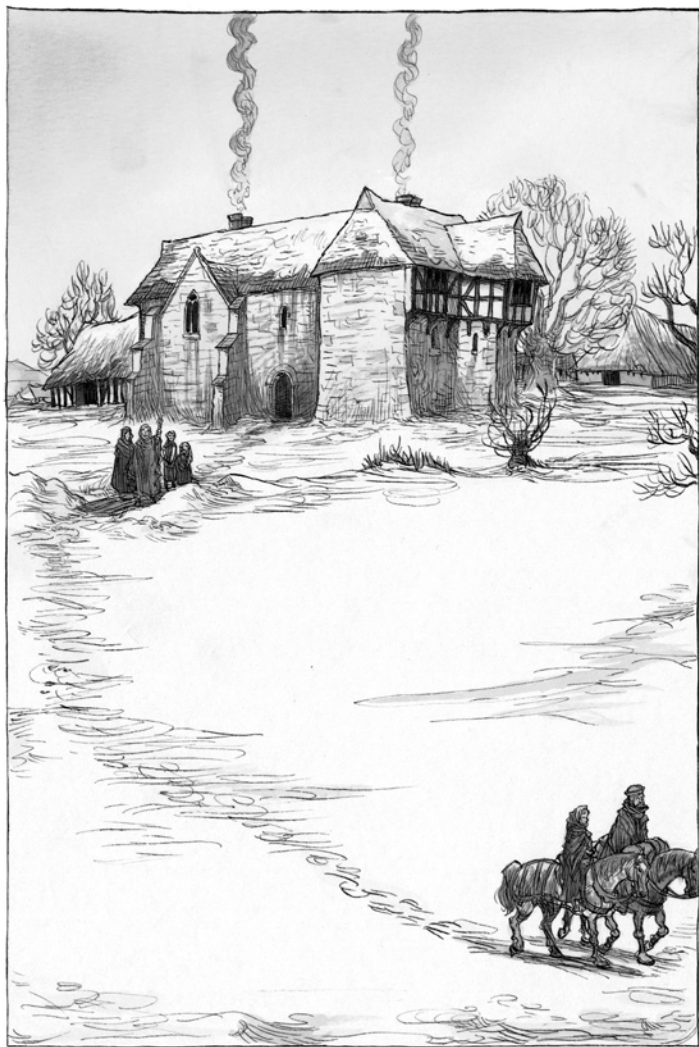
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Strandborough Castle

- | | | |
|----------------------------|----------------------------|------------------|
| 1 Drawbridge | 10 Kitchens | 15 Archery Butts |
| 2 Moat | 11 Kitchen Garden | 16 North Wall |
| 3 Gatehouse and Guardrooms | 12 Aunt Elizabeth's Garden | 17 Little Wood |
| 4 Bailey | 13 Stables and Armoury | 18 Mill |
| 5 Keep | 14 Kennels | 19 Well |
| 6 Great Hall | | |
| 7 Great Chamber (Solar) | | |
| 8 Toby's Room | | |
| 9 Chapel | | |





This Journal, being the
diary of myself, Tobias Burgess,
begins this day, the 2nd of January,
in the year of Our Lord, 1285.

I write these words at my home in the parish of
Saltington. Here I dwell with my father Henry, my
mother Gwynedd, and my two younger sisters Edythe
and Sian.

But soon I shall be leaving here, for I am to spend the
next twelvemonth (and more, I hope) as a page at the
castle of my father's elder brother, John Burgess, Baron
of Strandborough.

My uncle has expected me these past two years, but
my mother wept and would not let me go. In just two
days, though, I shall be eleven years of age, and my father
says I can wait no longer. At last I am to be taught the

skills and duties I must know to become a squire and even, mayhap, a knight – if my father can afford it!

My mother bids me write this journal so that I will remember all that passes, and can tell her of it when I see her next. For though Strandborough Castle is not twenty miles distant, 'tis most difficult country to cross and, as few people journey that way, news from there is scarce.

Now all that stops me is the weather, for the snow lies so thickly on the ground that the roads can barely be seen, let alone travelled upon! The delay tries both my patience and that of Hugh, my father's servant, whose task it is to deliver me to Strandborough. Though I shall be sad to leave my family (except for my sister Sian, who vexes me daily), I scarce can wait to begin my new life.

January 10th, Wednesday

Our arrival made me feel most grand, for when we were yet some distance away the watchman did spy us out and sound his horn, and my cousin Simon rode out to greet

us. Simon is full-grown and soon to be a knight, but I was greatly pleased to see him as he was kind to me when last he visited my father.

We entered the castle through a great gateway and into the Bailey beyond – my father's manor house, and his stables, would fit easily in this huge courtyard.

At the far end stands a strong tower house called the Keep. Within the Keep is the Great Hall, which is used for eating and other gatherings. The family live in newer dwellings built against the South Wall. Here Simon showed me where I would sleep and left me. I am to share my room with three other pages. We sleep on wooden pallets with mattresses of straw, like at home.

I confess I am so tired from the journey that I barely have strength to write these words.

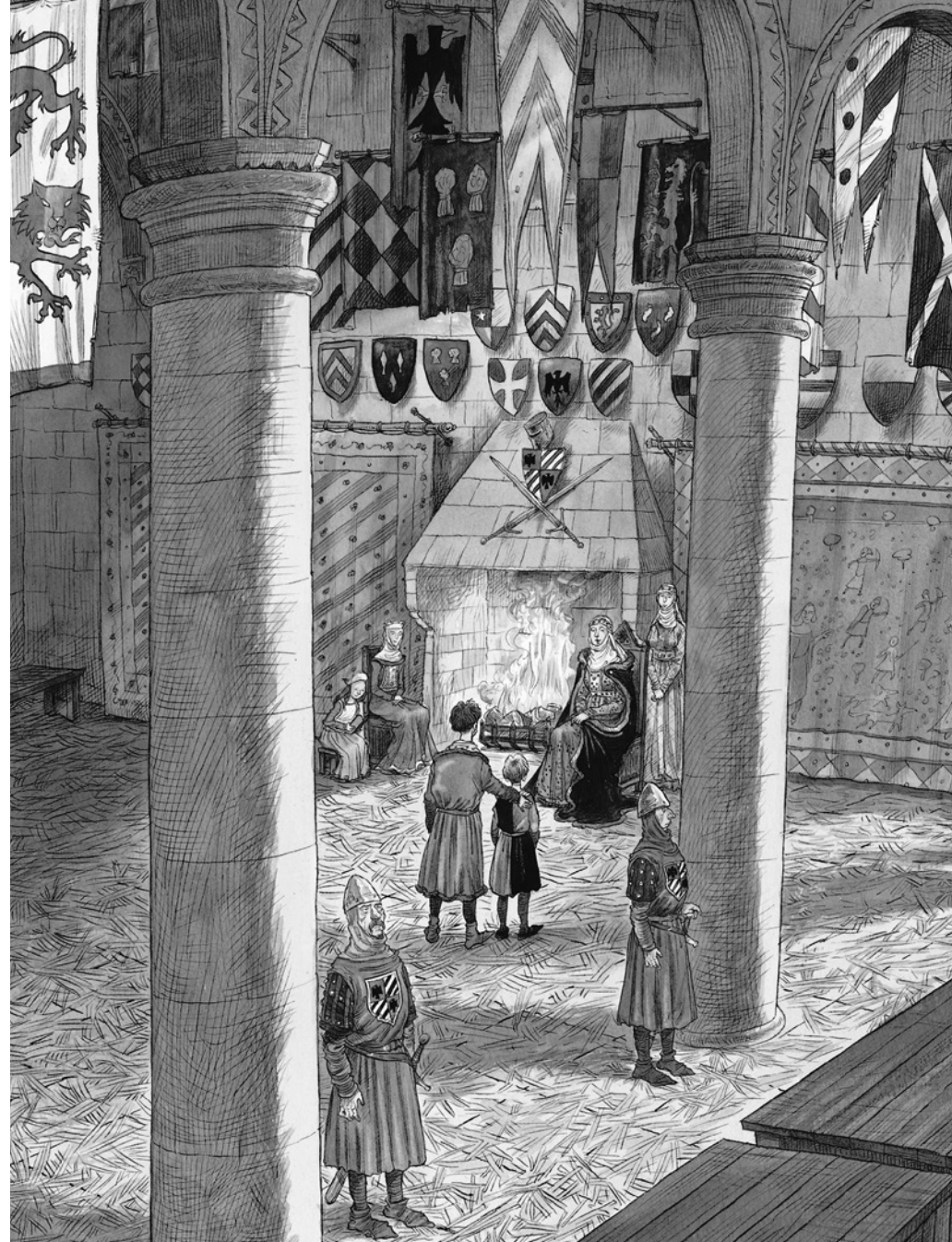


January 11th, Thursday

I awoke this morning early and had chance to observe the other pages while they slept. The one who woke next shared some bread with me. He told me his name was Mark and asked me mine. As we ate he pointed at the other sleeping pages, and laughed: "See Toby – Oliver and Humphrey shall have no bread, for they slumber still."

Soon Simon came to take me to the Great Hall, where my Aunt Elizabeth sat by a huge fire. She welcomed me fondly and told me that my uncle attends the King in the west of the country, but will return in a few days.

Then my aunt bade me greet my other cousins, Simon's sisters, Abigail and Beth. Abigail, who is the fairer of face, is younger than I, and her sister is older. When we were introduced Abigail blushed and looked at me from the tail of her eye. "Toby is here to learn the duties of a page," my aunt told them, "but this day I would like you to show him our home." Then, turning to me, she added that on the morrow I would learn what I must do to make myself useful.



January 12th, Friday

I find that everyone calls my uncle and aunt “My Lord” and “My Lady”, and that I must do likewise. There are so many strange things to learn and do here that today I have time to write only a line or two. I fear my journal will have many gaps in it!

January 13th, Saturday

Directly after we had broken our fast yesterday, my aunt summoned me and spoke to me of my duties. Pages here serve my aunt and uncle, and thus learn courtesy, and the manners and customs of a noble family.

Like the other pages, I am expected to make myself useful by running errands and carrying messages and suchlike. At mealtimes I will learn to serve my aunt and uncle and their guests – to fill their cups, and carve them slices of meat which I will place before them in a genteel way.

But as I am her nephew, I am also to be my aunt’s

personal page and must hold myself ready at all times to attend her.

(Though I thought this an honour, Humphrey – who

is the oldest of the pages here – scorned it, saying my aunt will have a sharper eye than most for my errors.)

Much of this seemed to me to be dull stuff, so I asked my aunt if I might also ride in a hunt. She did not answer, but instead told me of my studies. The castle Chaplain is away at present, for he visits with the Bishop, but on his return I will join the other pages under his tutelage. With this, my aunt bade me make myself familiar with the many buildings and places within the castle walls, and then dismissed me.



January 14th, The Lord's Day

This noon 'twas my task to serve my aunt at table, though I fear that through the nervous shaking of my hand as much food fell to the floor as was placed before her.

The Hall was crowded, for there are many servants here, and it will be some days before I will properly know one from t'other. Only two of them are women, and one is constantly at my aunt's side. This woman, whose name is Isbel, dresses finely in clothes quite like my aunt's. The other is Isbel's maid. She wears clothes of red and blue, the same colours as the uniforms of many of the men servants.

I found it very odd that my aunt's servant should herself have a servant. But when I asked my aunt to explain she answered me sharply, saying, "Watch your tongue! Though she does my bidding, Isbel is no peasant girl. She is as much my companion as my servant. Like you, and many others who serve your uncle and me, she comes from a good family and is used to soft clothes and

being waited upon." Then my aunt said, "Why, even a servant's servants sometimes need servants!"

And 'twas true, as I soon discovered. The Steward, for instance, who seems a prim and fussy man, is the most senior of the servants and is in charge of I know not how many others. Among those

he instructs is the Butler, whose duty it is to care for the castle wines and ales. The Butler in turn commands the Cellarer, who stores the wine. And even the Cellarer has boys to lift the barrels for him.

All but the lowest servants eat together in the Hall, and we pages sit with them when our serving duties are done.





January 15th, Monday

I attended my aunt today in the Great Chamber. This is where my aunt and uncle sleep, but by day my aunt receives visitors there and instructs the servants in the running of the castle. At home we call this room the Solar, though ours is smaller by far. My aunt is always busy, for it is she who directs the Steward in the management of the castle household. She jokes that when my uncle is away she must do all her own work and also everything he does – except for shaving!

January 16th, Tuesday

With my aunt again this day and met more of the people who aid her in her daily busy-ness. Within the walls, it is the Constable who minds the castle when my aunt and uncle are both away at their other estates. When my aunt told him who I was he did not smile or speak, but sighed deeply as if I had already wronged him.

With him also was the Reeve. This man has charge of