The background of the cover is a photograph of a stone castle tower, possibly a lighthouse or a watchtower, silhouetted against a bright sunset sky. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a gradient from orange to yellow. The tower is dark and textured, with a small decorative finial on top.

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**Citadels
of Power:**
THE CASTLE IN HISTORY
AND ARCHAEOLOGY

Professor Thomas J. Finan
Saint Louis University

Citadels of Power:

The Castle in History and Archaeology

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**Citadels of Power:
The Castle in History and Archaeology
Professor Thomas J. Finan**



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COURSE GUIDE
Editor - James Gallagher
Design - Edward White

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#UT180 ISBN: 978-1-4498-4969-6

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About Your Professor

Thomas J. Finan

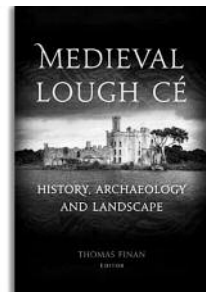
Thomas J. Finan is an assistant professor of history and the director of the Center for International Studies at Saint Louis University. He received his Ph.D. in history from the Catholic University of America in 2001, and he holds degrees from the University of Missouri-Columbia and the Divinity School of the University of Chicago. Finan was Rotary Ambassadorial Scholar and a visiting scholar in the Department of Medieval History at Trinity College, Dublin, during the 1999–2000 school year.

Finan's research interests include the history and archaeology of medieval castles of Ireland, and more particularly the archaeology of the later medieval Gaelic lordships in the western regions of Ireland. For the last ten years he has been director and codirector of the Kiltasheen Archaeological Project, a project that investigated the remains of a thirteenth-century ecclesiastical complex and hall house. The project, funded by the Royal Irish Academy, was one of the largest ongoing research excavations in Ireland in the last decade. Finan has also directed research excavations in Missouri, and he worked as a site supervisor in Ireland, Wales, and England.

Finan has published a number of articles related to castles and fortifications in the western part of Ireland. He recently edited *Medieval Lough Cé: History, Archaeology, and Landscape*, a collection of essays that investigate the Gaelic lordship of Moylurg in the later medieval ages. He is presently completing a monograph on the King's Cantreds that investigates the relationship between ethnic and environmental ideology in medieval Roscommon.

He is immediate past president of the American Society of Irish Medieval Studies, and he is active in a number of international archaeological and castle study organizations, including the Society for Medieval Archaeology and the Chateau Gaillard Conference.

Finan lives in St. Louis with his wife, Marti, and his two sons, Tommy and Conor.





Lismore Castle in Waterford County, Ireland.

Introduction

Castles, along with knights, cathedrals, and monks, are likely one of the more important features of the medieval world, and castles continue to draw a great deal of attention from tourists as well as medieval historians, art historians, and archaeologists. Yet, despite their relative importance within medieval society, castles are also one of the least understood features of the medieval landscape. This course will consider the chronology of medieval fortifications and castles, and it will then consider the social and landscape natures of castles. It will examine the role of the castle in particular regions in Europe in the Middle Ages, most particularly the British Isles, France, and the Crusader settlements in the Holy Land.

The modern visitor to a medieval castle in Europe is often faced with a somewhat artificial representation of a castle that has more to do with nineteenth-century Romantic ideas of the castle than the reality of what a castle meant in the Middle Ages. Most national antiquities authorities lean toward the idea of preserving remains as we find them as opposed to reconstructing remains at a set time; therefore, castles today are more often than not simply the stone shells of what were once very complicated buildings.

Over the last thirty years, as a result of archaeological and historical research throughout Europe, scholars now know that the stone edifices that exist in the modern landscape were just one part of a castle's nature. Earth and timber castles (which do not survive as easily as stone) are now known to have been militarily sound fortifications and not the "second class" castle, as has often been assumed. Scholars have also considered the way in which castles are constructed that define how spaces were used within and without the castle, so that the castle's primary functions (military, administrative, and residential) were emphasized.

Lecture 1

What Is a Castle? Why Study a Castle?

The Suggested Reading for this lecture is Oliver H. Creighton and Robert Higham's *Medieval Castles*.

Why study castles? While your author would likely ask the question “Why *not* study castles?” the fact of the matter is that most people know that castles, along with cathedrals and monasteries, were one of the most important architectural features of the medieval era. The other factor to consider is that castles (again, along with monasteries and cathedrals) still exist in the modern European countryside and therefore still inspire and inform the popular imagination of visitors today.

For a moment, close your eyes and imagine a castle. Try to remember at least five different aspects of the castle that you imagine. You likely pictured a large, grey-stone building with tall walls, corner drum towers, a draw-bridge, and perhaps a moat. But where did this image of a castle come from? Have you ever actually been to a castle? Have you ever actually looked at a castle, either in person or in pictures or video? In short, our preconceptions about castles tell us what we think we should see in a castle, and in some ways this has in fact shaped castle studies over the course of the twentieth century.

Through most of the twentieth century, castle studies were dominated by two related ways of understanding castles: the castle as military structure and the castle as architectural feature. These two views are related in that most of the people who studied castles throughout the twentieth century in Europe tended to be government civil servants who were tasked with the responsibility of maintaining the stone fabric of these monuments (along with other monuments in the European countryside). Many of these civil servants also happened to be retired members of the military, and so in that sense they often brought a very militaristic perspective to the care of castles. When they looked at a castle, the first thing that they might have noticed were the defensive features of the castle, such as the walls, the gatehouse, and the placement of arrow loops. At the same time, though, these civil servants were often called to provide reports on the histories of the castles that focused on the actual standing remains of the castle, which, more often than not, meant the stone ruins of castles. The way that they would present this material was typically in an art historical fashion, considering the designs and decorations of the castles within the contexts of particular art historical traditions, like the Romanesque or the Gothic styles of architecture.

The connection between these two views of castles effectively focused attention on just the military component of the standing remains of castles, which, in short, limits our understanding of these complex structures. The further impact of the Second World War and the experience of many historians and archaeologists further emphasized this military orientation; new information in the form of inventories and aerial photography gave scholars the ability to enhance their understanding of castles, but they continued to do so primarily from a militaristic perspective.

The great change in our understanding of castles took place in the late 1970s as a result of the research of a number of scholars in England who considered castles less as utilitarian, military settlement and more as a symbolic feature of the medieval landscape. In other words, while the castle itself might have defensive features that were “militaristic” in form, what might the castle itself symbolize to different aspects of medieval society? While walls were certainly constructed to keep people out, might the height, angle, and perspective of the walls convey symbolic strength as much as literal military strength?

One great and obvious example of this is Neuschwanstein Castle, otherwise known as “Mad King Ludwig’s Castle,” in Bavaria. This nineteenth-century Romanesque Revival castle appears on the surface to be a well-defended and well-located castle. However, the castle is clearly not defensible from either a medieval or nineteenth-century perspective. The walls are filled with windows that would provide access to the interior, and the thin walls of the external walls and towers would easily be destroyed by the most basic of medieval siege weapons. Yet the nineteenth-century architects designed the castle with features that they believed would convey antiquity and strength despite the age and weaknesses of the castle.



Neuschwanstein Castle, in southwest Bavaria, Germany.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, one particular castle became the focus of attention for many castle scholars: Bodiam Castle, in southern England, was built by Sir Edward Dalyngrigge in 1385. He was a retired veteran of the Hundred Years War with France and obtained a license to crenellate (or a license to build a castle) to defend the English coast from French invasion. The castle today is, indeed, extremely imposing. The castle is located on a lake that provides a moat-like defense, and the access to the main gate of the castle is well defended with towers, arrow loops, and a drawbridge. However, the castle itself is not even located near the coast of England, and

when the arrow loops near the gate are further analyzed, they are not even directed toward points of access. The battlements at the top of the wall are too small to conceal defenders, and access to the parapets is not very easy at all. The lake itself is only a couple feet deep, and, finally, the whole site is overlooked by higher ground that would provide a clear spot for lobbing arrows and projectiles into the castle.

So what is Bodiam Castle? The castle was constructed by Sir Edward to look like a castle “should” look. The military function was not nearly as important for Sir Edward as the relative appearance of military function, and, in fact, the design of the surrounding landscape was much more important than the actual castle itself. Visitors were brought to the castle via a long, winding road constructed around the castle, giving the visitor a forced perspective that makes the walls of the castle stand out from the surrounding land.

With that said, then, how do we come to understand castles? We might think of any castle as a kind of book. Like any book, you ask questions, such as, who was the owner of the castle, who was the architect, what materials did they use, how is the castle designed, how did they pay for it, who was the castle designed to impress? In this sense, castles become much more complicated than they appear at first glance.

For instance, one of the lingering questions in castle studies is whether earthen and timber fortifications are in fact castles. Many of you likely think of a castle as having stone walls; many fortifications built by medieval lords used earth and timber, and they were in fact quite formidable. Because of their construction material, though, most of these fortifications do not survive.

In essence, castles were military features of the medieval landscape that were constructed by an exclusive class within society, the nobility. They were often very expensive to construct. They reflected the relative prestige of the owner, in much the same way that large houses or cars would convey a certain level of prestige in contemporary society. As we shall see throughout this course, there was a great deal of variability within this definition, both in terms of time and space.



Bodiam Castle, in Sussex, United Kingdom.

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING

Questions

1. What is a castle? When you think of a castle, what particular components of the castle are most prominent?
2. How would you design a castle, and what features would you accentuate? Would the security or social functions of the castle be more important?

Suggested Reading

Creighton, Oliver H., and Robert Higham. *Medieval Castles*. Colchester, Essex, UK: Shire Publications, Ltd., 2003.

Other Books of Interest

Kaufmann, J.E., and H.W. Kaufmann. *The Medieval Fortress: Castles, Forts, and Walled Cities of the Middle Ages*. New York: Combined Publishing, 2001.

Websites of Interest

1. The *Castle Studies Group* website provides information about the history, archaeology, and architecture of castles and castellated houses of all places from the medieval to the early modern period. —
<http://www.castlestudiesgroup.org.uk>
2. The *Neuschwanstein Castle* website provides a detailed history of the castle, tourist information, and an online tour. —
<http://www.neuschwanstein.de/englisch/palace/index.htm>

Lecture 2

Earthen and Timber Castles

The Suggested Reading for this lecture is Robert Higham and Philip Barker's *Timber Castles*.

In the previous lecture you were asked to consider how you might imagine what a castle looks like. Most people, when they hear the word “castle,” imagine a large stone structure with high walls and corner towers. This image is heavily impacted by the survival rate of stone castles, which, because of the construction materials involved, are more likely to survive in the modern landscape than earthen or timber castles. In actuality, the greater proportion of medieval fortifications were constructed out of timber and earth.

Why is the study of timber castles different from studying a stone castle? In most cases, timber castles simply do not survive in the modern landscape. By their very nature timber and earthen castles were constructed with materials that are susceptible to environmental degradation at a much greater extent than stone structures. Timber and earthen castles were typically built by two different kinds of lords. The first would be a newly appointed lord who would exert his authority over a newly acquired land, requiring a very quick and inexpensive way to provide protection for his knights. The second kind of lord who would build a timber castle would be one who was from the lower rungs of the elite and would not have the monetary resources to build an elaborate stone castle. As a result of these two points, historians rarely possess significant documentation to study these castles, because they were either not created or did not survive. Finally, compared to timber and earthen castles, stone castles have been extensively studied by other disciplines like art history, so there is a base of literature spanning several centuries that at least documents the features of stone castles. This literature does not exist for timber and earthen castles, and, in general, archaeology tends to be the discipline that best investigates these castles.

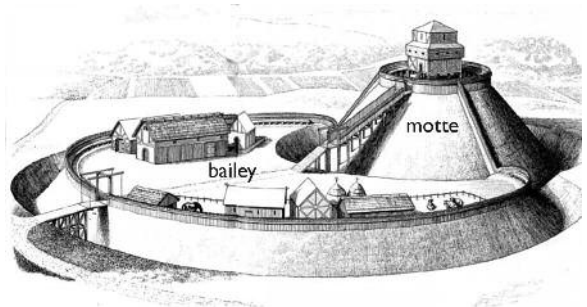
If we were to compare a map of modern and medieval Europe, the most obvious difference that we would note is the vast primeval forests that could provide the necessary wood to construct timber and earth fortifications. The resources were readily available in most locations across Europe. As we shall see, the excavation of stone by masons was a specialized job that required specialized training and know-how; a lord could simply assign a detail of knights to cut down sufficient timber to build a palisade in a relatively short amount of time.

Timber fortifications were constructed in the pre-medieval era by the Romans, the Germanic and Celtic peoples, and the earliest kingdoms of

Europe. But are these castles? The short answer is that they are not. The Romans built hundreds of frontier forts in Britain, Germany, and the ancient Near East; these forts are extremely homogenous across time and space, meaning that they were built in the same manner using the same styles and materials for a very long period of time. They were an effective means of providing protection and mobility for the Roman Legions as they tried to control the Roman frontiers. In Britain and France, a number of hilltop earthen forts built by native Celtic peoples still exist. These were built by non-Roman chieftains in the years 100 BC to 100 AD and were often used as a last holdout by a local population in times of attack. What is distinctly missing from these structures, though, is the social frame that makes a castle a castle: without lordship and an elite as existed in the Middle Ages we simply cannot call these castles.

The term “timber castle” is generally used to describe any medieval fortification built by a member of the nobility that was constructed using timber. The term itself, then, is based upon the construction material itself, and not the form or the style of the building. This is in contrast with most stone castles, which are typically defined by the form or style of the stone remains. The two main elements of most timber castles in the Middle Ages are the motte, an artificial mound of dirt designed to give defenders a heightened defense, and an encircling ditch, wall, or mound. With these two elements in mind, scholars have effectively defined three or four basic types of timber castles. The motte, again, is an artificial mound with a wooden palisade at the summit, often with a timber tower. These mounds can vary greatly in height, and while archaeologists have classified mottes based upon height, it is questionable whether this is meaningful. Some mottes are surrounded by a bailey, which is an earthen wall topped with a palisade. The outer bailey would typically enclose a settlement approximating a village, but in some cases it would simply enclose additional space for the needs of the lord’s forces. When a bailey was constructed independently of a motte, it is known as a ringwork castle. These ringworks are typically rounded enclosures. In the British Isles, these ringworks are sometimes constructed in a square form, and are known as “moated sites.” These fortifications typically enclosed farming settlements in more contentious neighborhoods of the realm, and some scholars would not necessarily consider these castles.

A drawing of a motte-and-bailey structure as depicted by an artist based on descriptions from early medieval manuscripts.



FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING

Questions

1. Are earth and timber fortifications really castles?
2. What kinds of defenses could make an earth and timber fortification formidable?

Suggested Reading

Higham, Robert, and Philip Barker. *Timber Castles*. New ed. Exeter, UK: University of Exeter Press, 2004.

Other Books of Interest

Merlen, R.H.A. *Motte and Bailey Castles of the Welsh Border*. 2nd ed. London: Palmers Press, 1987.

Websites of Interest

1. The *Castle Duncan* website forum provides detailed descriptions of earth and timber castles by David Sweetman. — <http://www.castleduncan.com>
2. The *Britannia History* website features an article by David Dawson entitled “The English Castle,” in which he discusses early Norman earth and timber castles. — <http://www.britannia.com/history/david1.html>

Lecture 3

Building a Castle

The Suggested Reading for this lecture is Tom E. McNeill's *English Heritage Book of Castles*.

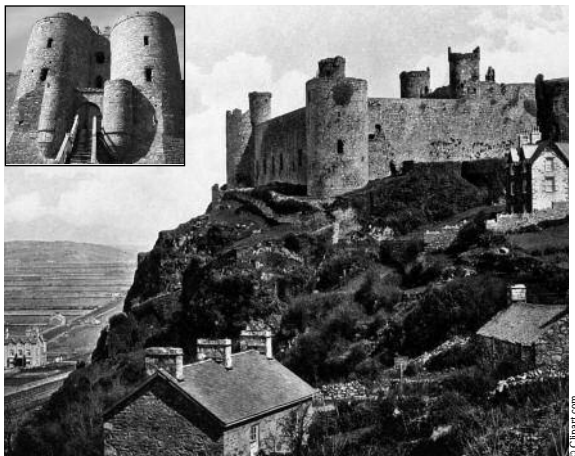
Upwards of 80 percent of the population of medieval Europe lived within very basic and unassuming cottages, and most likely never left the confines of their village or town over the course of their lives. The cottages were often timber or a combination of mud daub and timber, and they were often used not just as housing for peasants but for livestock as well. Most peasants would not have enjoyed the financial flexibility to build a bigger house or more elaborate house. On the opposite end of the spectrum, the kings and nobility of medieval Europe did have the financial leverage to construct castles and fortified residences as they saw fit. We might consider the contemporary notions of home construction or even automobile purchase, where size, style, and appearance can be very important considerations in terms of financial outlay; this was no different in the Middle Ages.

A lord or king who controlled a given plot of land could build his castle anywhere. But he was also faced with a number of factors that predetermined where he might build the castle. The topography was important, although the assumption that castles were built on high land or low land does not explain all castle construction. In some cases, such as at Harlech in Wales, the castle was constructed on a cliff to use height as a defensive feature. On the other hand, castles were just as likely to be constructed in valleys to control fords, bridges, or other lines of transportation. Military expediency was also important, such that castles were constructed near regions of conflict where the local population needed to be suppressed.

Harlech Castle
Gwynedd, Wales, ca. 1926

A concentric castle, constructed atop a cliff close to the Irish Sea, Harlech Castle was built by King Edward I during his conquest of Wales. It survived several assaults and sieges during its period of active use.

Inset: A recent image showing the imposing main gatehouse of Harlech Castle. The steps were originally a drawbridge. As well as this formidably defended entrance, the castle also had a fortified dock so that it could be supplied by sea.



But with all of that, there were a few key points that were important to castle construction. A castle would at the very least need to be located in close proximity to a water supply. This water supply was important during the construction of the castle, but of course the water was even more important to the castle in times of siege. For this reason, many castles are built on top of natural wells or water supplies. The medieval population did not necessarily have the same ideas about sanitation and waste, but they did understand that water was one way that human and animal waste could be eliminated. The castle had to be located in close proximity to the local population and cultivatable land; this is a point often forgotten in the Romantic idea of castles located in the wilderness regions of Europe. The castle was designed to not only protect the lord and his retinue but also the local population in times of siege.

We often think of castles as military buildings first, especially given our understanding of medieval society that has filtered to us through Hollywood and the media. But an important point to consider is that while the castle itself could control a strategic transportation or communication hub, the castle *itself* did not do the work. The castle provided static defense for the garrison of the castle, but then it only commanded an area within range of its missile weaponry: a trebuchet or ballista had a range of about three hundred meters, meaning that brigands or invading armies could get as close as a third of a mile to a castle without being attacked.

After the Norman Invasion of England in 1066, thirty-seven Royal castles were constructed in England. Twenty of these castles were constructed within towns that already existed, and a further twelve were constructed within the ruins of Roman forts. Clearly, the new Norman kings were making a social statement with the location of their castles, but it was likely just as much an economic statement, as these towns were where the economic activity was taking place within society.

So how much did a castle cost? While medieval figures are difficult to translate into modern dollars or Euros, we can consider the cost in a relative fashion. Earth and timber fortifications were less technical and didn't require as many craftsmen. Timber construction would have required skills present in nearly all towns and villages, and most peasants wouldn't be in a position to demand high wages. Also, at this time Europe was covered with vast amounts of forests, so timber was ready at hand. Scholars estimate that fifty people would take around forty working days to construct a modest-sized motte and bailey fortification. Stone castles could obviously vary in cost based upon size; the castle at Dover is estimated to have cost around £11,000, while the fortified keep at Newcastle cost around £1,000. Most lower-level castles cost around £50. But the important point to consider is that the cost of the construction of the castle would not be incurred all at once: there was no "financing" or banks, so in some cases the construction of a castle would take a decade and multiple generations of a noble family.

As with the rest of society, we know very little about most of the workers at castle construction sites. We have quite a bit of information about the higher-level architects and masons. One such mason was Master James of St. George, master mason of King Edward I of England. He designed most of the Edwardian castles of Wales, and he was quite innovative in terms of style and construction. This, too, is an important point, because for such royal castles the king could recruit across the kingdom for the best architects, while the local nobility would be much more limited.

And finally, we would need to consider the actual management of the construction. Building in stone, in itself, is not a complex technology; however, stone and timber had to be readily available and coordinated such that the supply of stone for certain features had to be available along with a sufficient supply of timber. The stones would have to be cut to the appropriate size. All of this would have to be managed by on-site architects.



Dover Castle in Dover, Kent, England

Dover Castle was founded in the twelfth century and has sometimes been described as the “Key to England” because of its defensive significance throughout history. It was extensively expanded and modified during the Napoleonic Wars, including the addition of tunnels beneath the cliff to serve as barracks. During World War II, the tunnels were used as an air-raid shelter and communications center. For a short time during the Cold War, it was planned for use as the seat of government in the event of a nuclear war.

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING

Questions

1. Why couldn't everyone build a castle in the Middle Ages?
2. What resources would a noble have to gather to construct a castle?

Suggested Reading

McNeill, Tom E. *English Heritage Book of Castles*. Reprint. London: Batsford, 1999.

Other Books of Interest

Taylor, Arnold J. *Studies in Castles and Castle-Building*. London: Hambledon Press, 1986.

Toy, Sidney. *Castles: Their Construction and History*. Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 1985.

Websites of Interest

French entrepreneur Michael Guyot acquired his lifelong fascination with castles working over his summer vacations helping restore national heritage sites in the French countryside. He and his partners are involved in two ongoing projects—one in Yonne, Burgundy, France, and one in Lead Hill, Arkansas—constructing thirteenth-century castles using only methods and materials available during medieval times. Both are open to the public as part of the fundraising to keep the projects going.

1. The *Chantier Médiéval de Guédelon* website provides a short video of the construction site, images, and descriptions of the project. — <http://www.guedelon.fr>
2. The *Ozark Medieval Fortress* website provides many of the same features as the French website above. — <http://ozarkmedievalfortress.com>

Lecture 4

The Norman Stone Keep

The Suggested Reading for this lecture is *Anglo-Norman Castles*, edited by Robert Liddiard.

There are two definitions of the term “keep”: one is the final defensive position within a stone castle, the other being that building where the lord would maintain his residence, court, and administration. Those two definitions are not mutually exclusive, but in terms of the history of castle construction, the latter point is likely more accurate in describing the origins of the stone castle. Keeping in mind what was discussed in the lecture concerning timber and earth castle construction, it was very possible for a wooden castle to be more than formidable. But a stone castle of any sort represented another step in terms of the morphology of castles. The keep (or *donjon*, *bergfried*, or *gród*, depending upon your geographic location) was the first stone component of the castle, likely because it was that particular building that housed the residence, court, and administration of the lord.

The “idea” of the keep was likely arrived at by a number of lords in medieval Europe around the same time in the tenth or eleventh century. Stone construction techniques were most certainly present in society, as churches and monasteries were constructed in the seventh and eighth centuries. The stone keep, though, likely resulted out of a need on the part of the nobility to elaborate upon the defenses and prestige of earth and timber fortifications; the stone keep was also just as likely to be a high-status feature, particularly relative to the timber buildings built at the time. Eventually, we might imagine the lower levels of nobility emulating the higher levels by building in stone.

The *bergfried* is a tower type of construction prominent in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland. It evolved out of tower look-outs that had been used as far back as the fourth century by the Romans on their frontiers with the Germans. The topography of southern Germany, Switzerland, and Austria necessitates the construction of such watchtowers in the valleys of the more mountainous regions of those countries, so the added height was a great



One of the two twin *bergfried* at Burg Münzenberg, in Hessen, Germany.

advantage in terms of defense and communication. However, it is not likely that the bergfried is the origin of the keep, because the function of these towers, while militaristic, did not really include an administrative or residential quality.

We would have to look at the Normans in France and England for this particular building. The Normans descended from eighth- and ninth-century Viking raiders who settled along the coastal regions of France and the British Isles. While we think about the Normans particularly in relation to the Norman Invasion of England in 1066, their impact in Europe was much more widespread, in that they dominated regions of France, England, Ireland, Wales, Italy, and the Holy Land by the year 1200. This is an important consideration, because the Normans tended to be very flexible in terms of how they governed their lands. They typically adapted to local conditions, and they displayed a military prowess that was unrivaled for several centuries. Furthermore, they believed their own propaganda: they believed that they were the height of medieval civilization!

The best and most obvious example of a keep (and actually one of the most visited by tourists without them knowing it) is the White Tower of London within the Tower of London complex. It was built in 1078 by William of Normandy, the new King of England. It was constructed within the walls of the city of London and was clearly placed so as to impress upon the population that this king was here to stay and was more powerful than rivals. Nothing like it had been built in medieval England. At twenty-

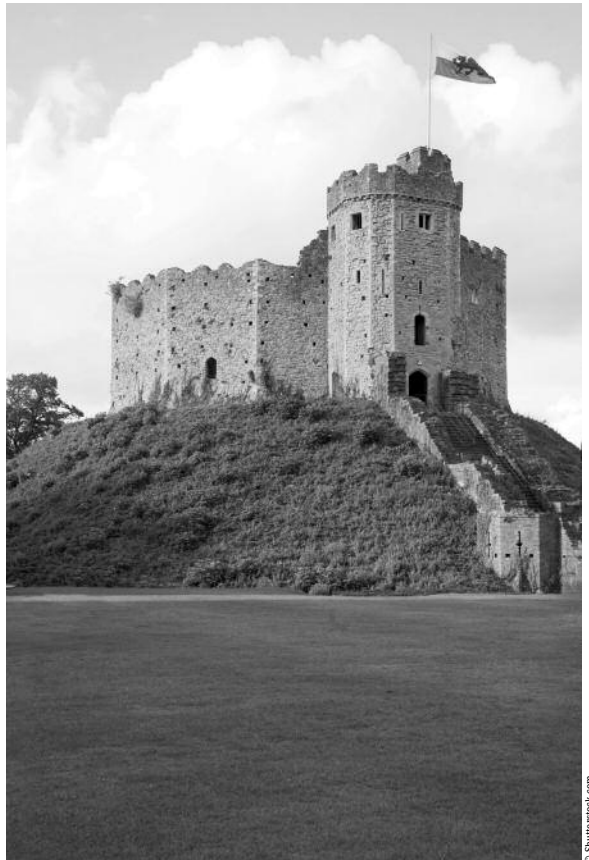


The White Tower inside the Tower of London complex in London, England.

seven meters high it was one of the taller secular buildings in England. With walls that were five meters thick at the base, it is quite imposing. Architecturally, one of the more curious points about the tower is that the stone for the corners and windows was imported to London from Caen (William's seat in Normandy). The other stone was local, so within the very fabric of the building we can see the merger of French and English stone, reflecting the new monarchy. The curtain walls surrounding the keep were built centuries later, primarily because the Tower simply was not that secure in terms of military protection. It is true that the Tower provided ample private space for the king, including chambers and a private chapel, as well as halls for courts and administration. Access to the king's chambers would have been strictly controlled; with one entrance to the whole building it was easy to provide a low level of protection if need be.

Soon after the Tower of London was constructed, lower-level members of the nobility converted their timber fortifications to stone. But the real construction of stone keeps takes off in the twelfth century during the troubled reign of King Stephen, where there was an extended period of anarchy in the realm. At this time, it would seem that stone keeps were constructed as elaborations of private halls of residence more than timber fortifications.

Another example of a Norman keep is at Cardiff Castle in Wales. It was built on a high motte on the site of a Roman castra (ca. 55 AD), first uncovered during the third Marquess of Bute's building campaign. The Norman keep, of which the shell remains, was constructed about 1091 by Robert Fitzhamon, lord of Gloucester and conqueror of Glamorgan.



FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING

Questions

1. Why did English lords begin to build keeps in the eleventh century?
2. How secure was a Norman-style keep?

Suggested Reading

Liddiard, Robert, ed. *Anglo-Norman Castles*. Suffolk, UK: Boydell & Brewer, Ltd., 2002.

Other Books of Interest

Gravett, Christopher. *Norman Stone Castles: The British Isles 1066–1216*. Vol. 1. Colchester, Essex, UK: Osprey Publishing, 2003.

Websites of Interest

1. The *Castles, Abbeys, and Medieval Buildings* website provides a detailed description and history of the massive Norman keep at Rochester Castle in Kent, England. — <http://www.castles-abbeyes.co.uk/Rochester-Castle.html>
2. The *Castles of Wales* website features a section on Norman castles in that country. — <http://www.castlewales.com/norman.html>

Lecture 5

The Concentric Castle

The Suggested Reading for this lecture is John R. Kenyon's *Medieval Fortifications*.

The typical Norman keep-type of castle provided a modicum of protection for a noble in times of anarchy or social unrest. Simply having a well protected door on the second floor of a stone building could at least provide some security, but it might not successfully withstand a concerted attack on the structure. These facts led to what is known as the concentric castle in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The basic idea behind the concentric castle is that the defenders of a castle could create a defense in depth, such that any attacker would have to deal with multiple layers of defense before getting to the keep.

The keep castle certainly served its purpose in providing a secure residence and site for the noble. This keep could be more easily defended, though, by encircling the keep with a stone wall, either connected to the keep or with the keep in the center. Access to the central courtyard could be provided by a gate, but the point would be that the wall would provide a barrier to accessing the keep easily. We might also imagine that adding another wall, paralleling the original wall, would provide further protection. The inner wall was typically taller than the outer wall so that defenders on that inner wall could man a higher position from which to fire on attackers, both outside the outer wall during a siege and inside the outer wall in the event that the wall was breached.

Dover Castle in England is often discussed as a great concentric castle. The Great Tower at Dover, constructed by Henry II, rivals the Tower of London in size and shares many architectural features and spatial layouts. The outer walls of the complex were added later, with further defenses then added to protect the gates that allowed access to the courtyard. A barbican (a defensive outpost not part of the main castle) was added to protect the gate leading to London, and

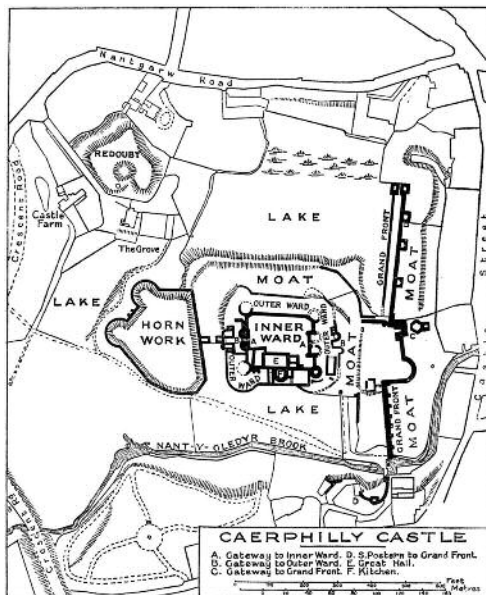


The Great Tower at Dover Castle in Kent.

towers were added at the weak spots where walls met at corners. But the underlying point to consider with Dover Castle is that this is not a true concentric castle, because the design of the castle complex itself was somewhat haphazard. The further defenses were added to protect the keep, the most important status symbol of the site; the keep was poorly defensible against a large army.

The first real concentric castles in the British Isles were built in Wales. Caerphilly, constructed in 1268 in response to repeated Welsh uprisings, was built by Gilbert de Clare, a high-level noble. It is a huge complex, and it is the second largest castle in the British Isles after Windsor Castle. What makes Caerphilly innovative and unique for its time is that it was built anew on a totally new site,

controlling access to a river. The architects did not have to integrate older features (such as a keep) into the castle, which meant that the latest in castle technologies could be employed. It has two layers of curtain walls that are effectively parallelograms; these walls are then surrounded by a series of large water defenses including a lake and a moat. It is a flexible castle, in that all parts of the castle are readily accessed by other parts, and the intramural walks gave access to towers and gatehouses (each of which could be independently held).



Caerphilly Castle, Wales

The plan of Caerphilly Castle (top), as published in *Castles* (1926) by Charles Oman, and a contemporary image of the ruins (bottom).

This is one of the largest, the most imposing, and the most scientifically constructed castles in Wales. Its vast towers seem to rise directly from the lake that nearly surrounds it. However, the draining of the lake in the 1930s has impaired the view, as the vast ruins now rise from a mostly marshy meadow ground.

But where did this idea come from? The idea of concentric defense was likely one of the technical innovations brought back to Europe from the nobles who went on Crusade in the eleventh century. The Crusaders from Europe would have seen, for the first time, the walls of Byzantium, which, at this point, were some of the largest and most heavily defended town walls in the world. They would have also seen Islamic military architecture in the form of the castra, which was a square-shaped stone fortification possibly modeled on the idea of the square Roman fort. Raymond of Toulouse captured one of the great Islamic castles of the Middle East, Krak de Chevaliers, in 1099; the castle was subsequently abandoned but then reoccupied by the Knights of the Hospital of St. John in 1142. Krak is a massive castle, with an inner curtain wall one hundred feet thick and an outer wall nine meters thick. Each of the seven towers have thirty-feet-thick walls.

Why is Krak de Chevaliers so important in this context? We know that King Edward of England visited the site while on Crusade in 1272. When he returned to England, all of the castles that he built in Wales employed this pattern of concentric walls and defenses. But this really does not answer where the idea for Caerphilly Castle came from; it is likely that de Clare was influenced by Middle Eastern designs, since a number of English knights went on the Second Crusade. It could just as easily be the case that the idea of concentric defense is a natural outgrowth of defensive features of keeps; a keep itself has multiple layers of defense, with a door and passages designed to funnel an enemy.

At the left, a sketch of how Krak de Chevaliers appeared during the twelfth century, and below, an aerial view taken in 2008. It is a concentric castle built with both rectangular and rounded towers.



FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING

Questions

1. What is the difference between a concentric castle and a castle with multiple layers of defenses?
2. In what ways did the Crusades influence European castle architecture?

Suggested Reading

Kenyon, John R. *Medieval Fortifications*. New ed. London: Continuum International Publishing Group, Ltd., 2005.

Other Books of Interest

Miller, Frederic P., John McBrewster, and Agnes F. Vandome, eds. *Concentric Castle*. Beau Bassin, Mauritius: Alphascript Publishing/VDM Publishing House Ltd., 2010.

Websites of Interest

1. The *Caerphilly Castle* website provides a detailed history of the castle and images. — <http://www.caerphillycastle.com>
2. The *Middle Ages* website features an article discussing the history, design, and structural amenities of concentric castles. — <http://www.middle-ages.org.uk/the-concentric-castle.htm>

Lecture 6

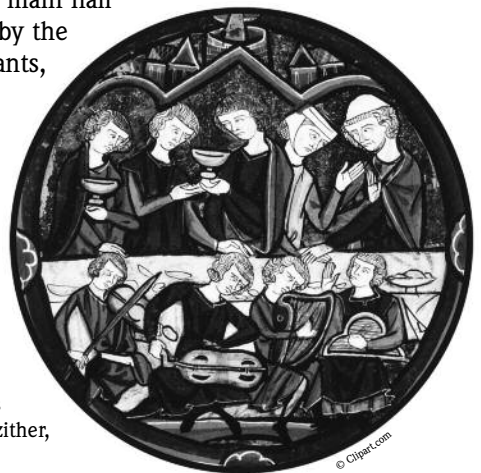
The Social Organization of Castles

The Suggested Reading for this lecture is Oliver H. Creighton's *Castles and Landscapes: Power, Community, and Fortification in Medieval England*.

In order to gain some appreciation for the content of this lecture, consider where you live right now, and compare that to where you grew up. How are the spaces organized? In other words, where are the important parts of the house (such as the kitchen, bedrooms, and bathrooms), and how are they accessed? Where is the public space in relation to those spaces? These are questions that actually help us explain how and why the space within the castle was organized, because spatially a castle had two contradictory basic needs: it had to provide limited access to the lord who owned the castle, and it had to provide adequate protection to that lord and his court.

In this sense, the social and spatial organizations of the castle are actually one and the same. The space within a castle was organized in a way that mirrored the hierarchical relationships of lordship within medieval society. This is also a somewhat difficult concept for modern readers to grasp: there was no sense of social mobility in the Middle Ages. People were born into a class and stayed in that class for their entire lifetime. The physical space within the castle was organized around this principle. There were a number of ways that a lord could make someone of lower status feel more than a little uncomfortable. While a peer of the lord might have access to the lord's hall, a lower-status person would be stopped at the gate, at doors, in courtyards, and at other spaces within the castle. They might be denied access at certain points or might be denied access to facilities like a toilet or heated space. The kitchens and the main hall would, of course, only be accessed by the lord, his immediate cooks and servants, and special visitors.

The hall of the lord was where he would host guests and provide meals and entertainment. But before the actual meal or entertainment the lord would likely invite visitors to partake of the hunt on his property. As we shall see in our

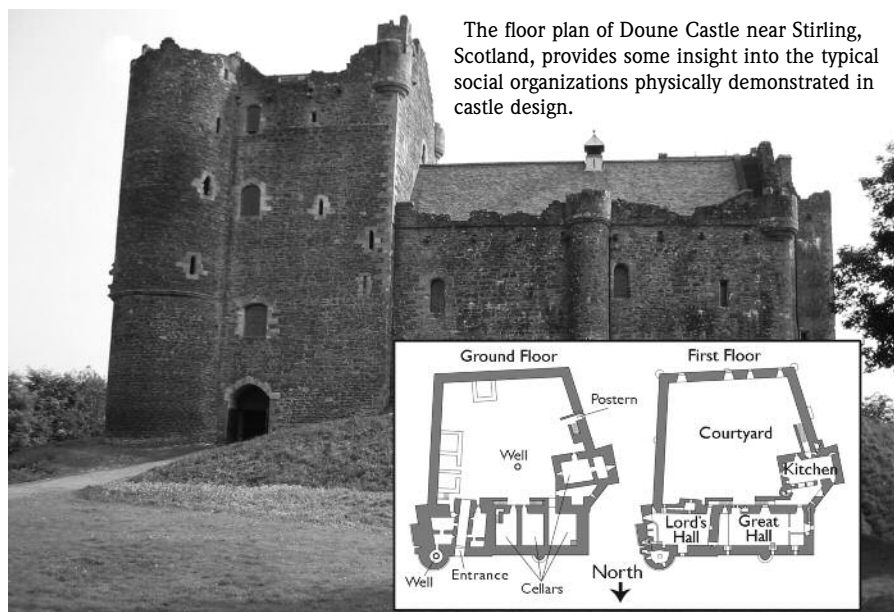


A banquet scene at a castle showing nobles dining while musicians playing violin, viol, zither, and harp provide entertainment.

next lecture, the space outside the castle was as heavily managed as the interior of the castle; it was organized to provide the lord with as much land as possible to provide as varied a hunt as he wished. The greater the hunt and the chase, the greater the feasting afterward, and the greater recognition he would receive from peers and overlords.

When we look at the maps of castles today, the most obvious features that stand out to us are the walls, corners, and moats. These features were important for defense. But of more interest in the sense of internal spatial organization is the location of doors and windows, because it is the door that gives access to space and the window that gives the person within a room a view outside the space. If a map of a given castle is drawn to show access to space (using a sort of family-tree type of diagram) it becomes apparent that the most remote and private spaces in the castle are the chambers of the lord. This chamber would usually have direct access to the main hall, which was then directly accessed by the kitchen. A series of doors would lead to the hall, beginning with the door at the front gate, the door at the keep, the door off a staircase, and perhaps another door at the hall.

These levels of security, then, can also be seen as markers of social status. The castle gate itself was the first stage, and most peasants would be denied regular access beyond this point. The individual who crossed the gate would then be met by a multilayered defense in the gatehouse. Individuals



who had business with the lord or his staff might be given access to the central courtyard. The select few of high enough status might be invited into the hall to do business or be entertained, while the chamber and private lodgings were the most controlled area of all.

Within this general schema, we can imagine any number of permutations that would provide more or less controlled access. A castle could have multiple courtyards to add a further layer of security. Towers that provided protection in times of attack could also become part of the overall social structure of the castle by giving access to both the walls and courtyard. In later castles, as at Bolton in England, the seemingly straightforward square layout of the castle is much more complex. When considered in this manner, even Bodiam Castle, often charged with being a castle with less than militarily defensive design, becomes an extremely complicated social construct.



© Phil Laroock



© The British National Trust

An aerial view of Bodiam Castle from 2,000 feet above the Sussex plain (top), and a model of Bodiam showing the symmetry of the castle as it is believed to have appeared when built in the fourteenth century (bottom).

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING

Questions

1. Why were certain areas of the castle closed off from most people?
2. What parts of the castle were meant for public display, and why?

Suggested Reading

Creighton, Oliver H. *Castles and Landscapes: Power, Community, and Fortification in Medieval England*. New ed. London: Equinox Publishing, Ltd., 2005.

Other Books of Interest

Gies, Joseph, and Frances Gies. *Life in a Medieval Castle*. New York: HarperCollinsPublishers, 1979.

Websites of Interest

1. The *Internet Medieval Sourcebook* website from Fordham University features information on social classes, medieval legal theory and practice, and medieval people in the literature of the period. —
<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/sbook1u.html>
2. The *ORB: On-line Reference Book for Medieval Studies* website provides a detailed description of the many facets of medieval society. —
<http://www.the-orb.net/textbooks/westciv/medievalsoc.html>

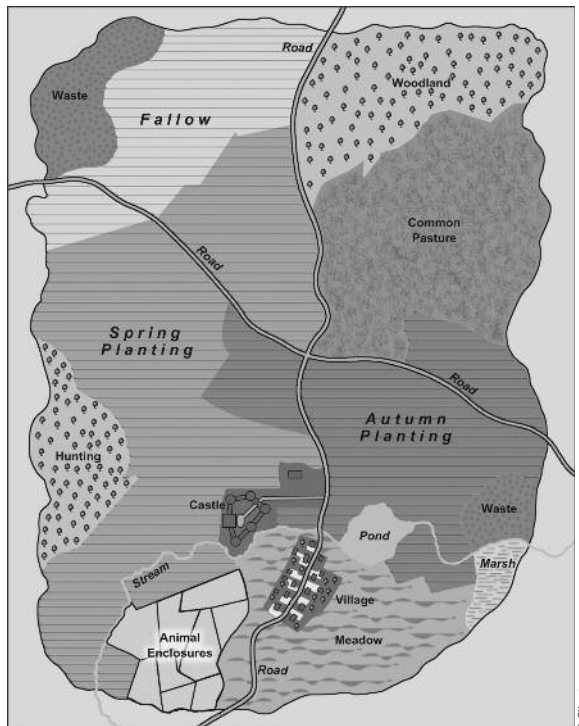
Lecture 7

The Landscape of Castles

The Suggested Reading for this lecture is Robert Liddiard's *Castles in Context: Power, Symbolism, and Landscape, 1066 to 1500*.

When we hear the term “landscape,” we often think of nineteenth-century paintings depicting wild and stormy mountains or sea coasts, with miniscule humans placed in a corner almost as an afterthought. Those “landscape paintings” are part of a tradition of thinking about the physical space inhabited by humans, but the point to really consider is that artistic depiction comprises a perceived space and represented space, or, as in German, *landschaft*. Just as the representation of the human body in artistic form is always a perception and projection, so too is our understanding of that complicated interaction between humans, the earth, and the other life-forms that share our environment.

In the middle of the twentieth century W.G. Hoskins wrote *The Making of English Landscapes*, a remarkable book that explained how we could examine local history by charting the changes that could be seen in the modern landscape. His work was important, because for the first time historians were forced to consider the possibility that people were not only influenced by the “great forces” of history (kings, wars, and famines, for instance) but also local fluctuations in the environment, particular topographies unique to a



A generic plan of a medieval castle landscape that was often set up for open-field strip farming. The land had some enclosures, a triennial crop rotation, the lord's castle, hunting land, fish pond, common woodland, pasturage, and meadow lands.

given region, or the use of particular agricultural techniques popular in one region but not another. So Hoskins changed the way people thought about landscape and history. But what exactly do we mean when we use the term “landscape” today? If we were to consider broadly that the term “geology” refers to the study of the physical Earth, and that “geography” is the study of the interaction between humans and that physical Earth, “landscape” might be defined as how humans perceive the space they live in, and how and why they alter and change the space in accordance with that particular perception. Landscape history, then, is the study of how those perceptions of physical space have changed over time, using textual and documentary sources. Landscape archaeology, similarly, is the study of that kind of change, but it comes as a result of studying the physical remains left by humans.

Another term that we might have heard before is “landscape architecture.” In a modern context, principles of architecture are applied to altering the physical environment of humans at home and work, in essence to morph a preexisting space for a desired aesthetic appeal. A university campus is usually a great example of this idea: while we might observe modern buildings that function as classrooms and offices, those buildings might be much older, or might be built on top of buildings that are much older, or might be placed in designed spaces that are much older. Those spaces may only exist in terms of paths and sidewalks today; by using old maps or real estate records, we can



Two contemporary images of Portchester Castle show its proximity to the harbor (top), its strategic location along the river, and continuity of roadways leading to the village since its earliest days (aerial view).

© Jack Tallions

© Google Maps

see how a campus, for instance, has changed over time to meet the changing needs of a university.

In the Middle Ages, we can likely observe a number of different kinds of landscapes, sometimes in proximity to each other, sometimes overlapping each other, and sometimes nowhere near each other. The village, agricultural and pastoral lands, ecclesiastical and monastic holdings, and lordly domains were all present in most countries of medieval Europe. The castle (as a building feature) can be seen as part of any of these landscapes, but it was primarily a manorial center, in a sense where the management of the lord's economic and social life would take place. Consider the castle at Portchester in England. The castle is located near a harbor and was constructed in the remains of an old Roman fort. But when the castle is considered in the wider urban landscape of Portchester, modern roads and walkways reveal the original medieval field divisions and medieval settlement.

The agricultural output of the manor was the main source of revenue for the lord, but these were not the only parts of the economy that would have impacted the landscape. Grains and livestock were of course important foodstuffs for the majority of the populations. In medieval Europe, deer were considered *the* aristocratic animal to keep, hunt, and serve at manorial banquets. Fish were also kept in managed ponds close to the castle. Doves were kept in structures known as "dovecotes," and rabbits were often maintained in earthen mounds in the lordly landscape. These animals were kept and managed by a staff working for the lord of the castle, and that staff would have had exclusive rights to actually enter the lord's private lands. At Barnard Castle in England, one of the largest stone castles constructed in late twelfth-century England, a village developed on the east side of the castle, while on the west side of the river a massive deer park (or hunting reserve) was maintained.

In some sense, then, we can talk about a "language of lordly landscape" that would have made sense to the medieval mind but might escape our observation. The landscape was centered on the castle, the residence of the lord. The land surrounding the castle was clearly demarcated. Only certain individuals had access to the deer park or the hunting grounds. The agricultural fields surrounding the village (often out of view of the castle so as to not ruin the lord's perception of his landscape) were plowed when the lord decided. These lands could be manipulated by the lord, in some cases to suit his economic needs, but also in an aesthetic sense, to accentuate certain points. Roads leading up to the castle might divert one's attention from the village to the private deer park. The windows in the guest chamber of the castle might look at the expansive hunting fields, while the village would be obscured by forest.

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING

Questions

1. How can the landscape both be part of the castle and be the setting for a castle?
2. In what ways can landscape contribute to the lordly feel of a castle?

Suggested Reading

Liddiard, Robert. *Castles in Context: Power, Symbolism, and Landscape, 1066 to 1500*. Oxford: Oxbow Books/Windgather Press, 2005.

Other Books of Interest

Liddiard, Robert. *Landscapes of Lordship: Norman Castles and the Countryside in Medieval Norfolk, 1066–1200*. London: British Archaeological Reports, 2000.

Websites of Interest

1. The *Culture 24* website provides an article from June 2004 entitled “Archaeologists Uncover Evidence of Portchester Castle’s Trading Past” by David Prudames. —
<http://www.culture24.org.uk/history+%26+heritage/archaeology/art22753>
2. The *Portchester Castle: An Interactive Guide* website features images, diagrams, a history, and bibliography of the castle. —
<http://www.portchestercastle.co.uk/index.html>

Lecture 8

Sieges

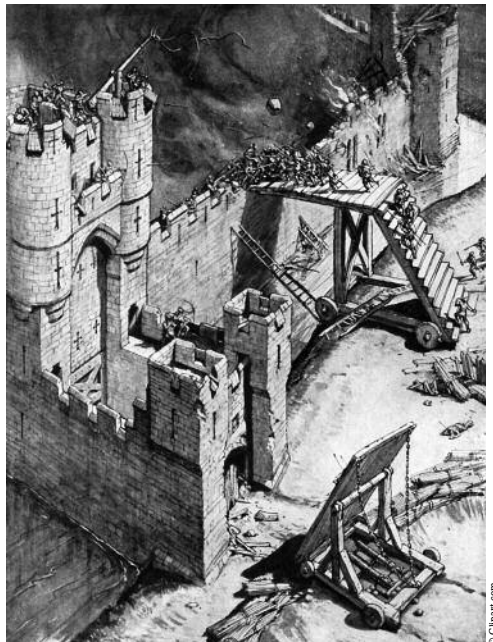
The Suggested Reading for this lecture is John France's *Western Warfare in the Age of the Crusades, 1000–1300*.

Medieval society was, in some sense, no different than ours. People in the Middle Ages lived with and accepted a certain level of violence. It was a violent time, despite all the best efforts of the clergy and people of good will to regulate the violence. In other words, nobody really wanted violence, but it was simply a reality. To make an analogy, we accept a certain level of crime in our society; we lock our doors to our homes and our cars, simply because we accept that some crime does take place that the authorities can not stop. In the Middle Ages, the castle might be seen as a building that provided the owner with the greatest defense in a violent world, while at the same time the castle provided the lord with a residence and manorial capital.

Medieval warfare had two basic intents: destroy the enemy's resources by pillaging, looting, and burning fields and farms, and take the enemy's land by occupying the land and building your own castles. Castles were constructed to prevent both actions. To pillage, a medieval army would need to cover a lot of space in a short time. A castle prevents the attacking force from freely doing so. Such an army on the move is dependent upon logistics for food and sustenance; the garrison of a castle would likely be well fed, be well rested, and have a better water supply than the attacking army, and it would therefore be in a stronger position than the opposition.

We tend to think of a siege as putting defenders at a huge disadvantage because they are stuck in the castle and are unable to get out; realistically, the point we return to is that if the defenders are able to keep

An artist's sketch of a typical castle siege in an advanced state of attack. The defenders employ arrows, rocks, and a catapult, while the attackers utilize covering engines and a tower in their efforts.



the attacking army out or at least delay that breach, the defender can likely outlast a siege. We have talked about multiple layers of defense, ultimately leading to the walled defenses of the Welsh castles of Edward I. We have therefore looked at concentricity as a militaristic, almost architectural idea; however, there is a military strategy and tactic at work here as well. If the lord or castellan can hold out and delay the collapse of the defenses, he can be in a better position than the attackers. The defenses of the castle were not necessarily designed to stop an attack: they were designed to delay the collapse of the defensive system. Each layer of defense, then, had multiple components. The moat around a castle was filled with water. Access to the castle across the moat was controlled at one point by a drawbridge. The walls were not just high but also thick. The crenellations at the top provided safety and protection to archers and defenders. Corner towers protected junctures of walls but also gave covering fire and platforms for engines.

Laying siege to a castle is the opposite of the defense. While there was a great deal of formality surrounding a siege, with the attacking lord asking the defender to simply surrender before hostilities began, in most cases the siege itself could be the scene of incredible slaughter. Terror was often used as a ploy to force surrender. William Rufus erected a gallows outside the walls of Le Mans during a siege, while at Antioch in 1097 prisoners were simply beheaded outside the gates.

The attacker had two options: starve out the defenders of the castle or assault the castle itself. Starving out the inhabitants would mean establishing a perimeter around the castle, preventing anyone from leaving or entering the castle. In a sense, the attacking forces would construct a counter-castle, of a sort, around the besieged castle.

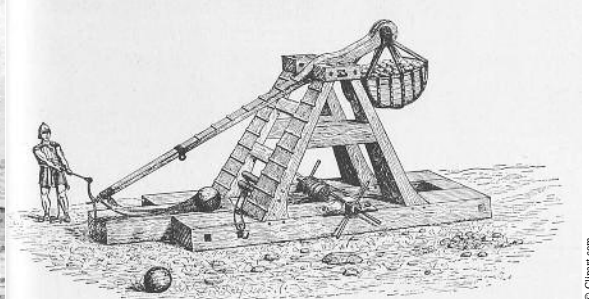
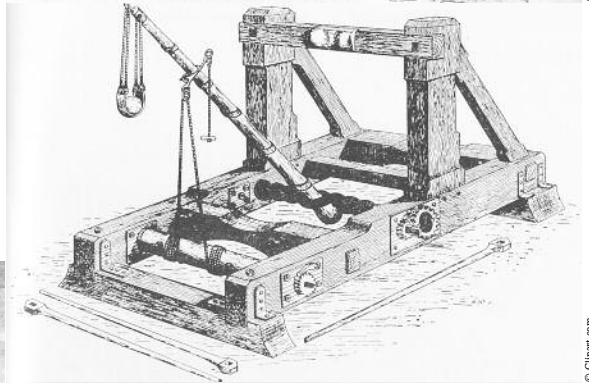
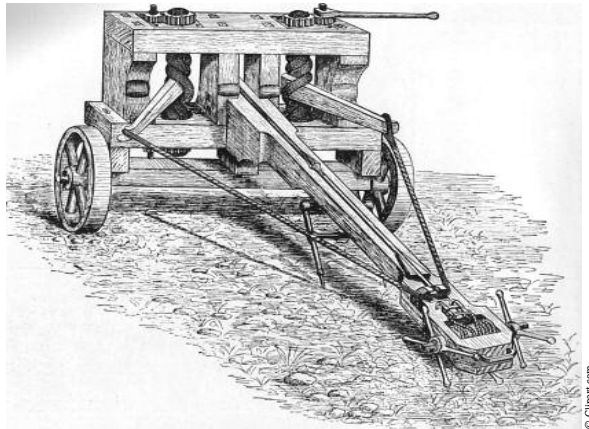
Attacking the castle would usually entail the use of some sort of missile, typically not to break down walls but to set fire to the interior of the castle. Fire arrows were very inexpensive and would require the inhabitants to use water to extinguish the fires. Siege engines could also be used to break down the walls. Most of these engines have a very long history, going back to the Roman era. The battering ram was constructed after a prototype in a manuscript. While the words used to describe medieval artillery varied from place to place and time to time, the real point to consider is that a number of stone-throwing machines were used in the Middle Ages. The well-known “catapult” was a torsion type of engine that did not require great skill, while the trebuchet required a large retinue to manage and fire it.

If you could not go through the walls, your other options were to go around them and under them. Siege towers would be constructed near the castle, and attackers would slowly move the tower closer to the wall. The siege tower could provide a platform from which archers could fire into the castle, and ultimately the tower could allow the attackers to enter the castle over the walls. Mines were often dug under the walls of castles to create a

breach in the defenses. Ideally, a castle would be built upon stone to prevent this. A mine could be started at some distance from the castle, shielded from sight by walls, bushes, or tents. The miners would excavate to a point under the wall, where they would fill the cavity with timber and pitch. By setting the wood and pitch on fire, they would thereby undermine the walls.

Siege Engines

Before gunpowder cannons became commonplace, siege engines employed in battles were manually operated by soldiers. The ballista (top) was a device that shot a spear-like projectile, much like a crossbow. With tar-dipped cloth, the spear was often set afire for more effect. The catapult (middle) and the trebuchet (bottom right) hurled large stones or boulders to breach castle walls. They could also be used to launch incendiary attacks much like the ballista. A variety of battering rams existed throughout the Middle Ages. One common type was covered with a roof to protect the soldiers using it (bottom left).



FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING

Questions

1. Who had the greater advantage during a siege, the people defending or attacking the castle?
2. What techniques and technology could be used in a medieval siege?

Suggested Reading

France, John. *Western Warfare in the Age of the Crusades, 1000–1300*. New York: Routledge, 1999.

Other Books of Interest

Humphrys, Julian. *Enemies at the Gates: English Castles Under Siege from the 12th Century to the Civil War*. London: English Heritage, 2007.

Wiggins, Kenneth. *The Anatomy of a Siege: King John's Castle, Limerick, 1642*. Rochester, NY: Boydell & Brewer, 2001.

Websites of Interest

1. *Think Quest* provides a detailed description of how different types of sieges on castles were executed and how the defenses were utilized to stall attackers. — <http://library.thinkquest.org/10949/fief/hisiege.html>
2. *De Re Militari: The Society for Medieval Military History* website provides an online reprint of an article entitled “Dover Castle and the Great Siege of 1216,” by John Goodall (*Chateau Gaillard XIX: Actes du Colloque International de Graz*, 1998), courtesy of Centre de Recherches Archéologiques et Historiques Médiévales. — <http://www.deremilitari.org/resources/articles/goodall.htm>

Lecture 9

Castles in the Kingdom of England

The Suggested Reading for this lecture is Colin Platt's *The Castle in Medieval England and Wales*.

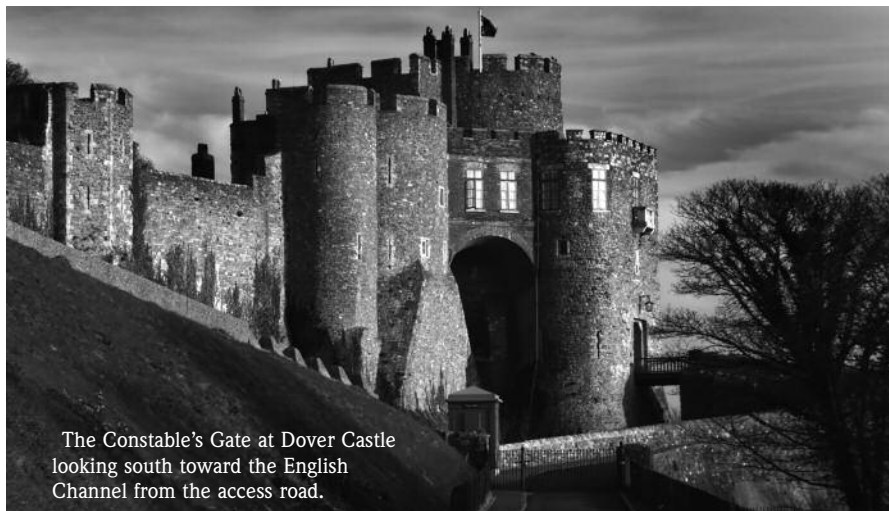
With this lecture we begin to look at particular castles within particular geographic regions of medieval Europe. Of course, this sort of method has some serious pitfalls, in that the medieval world encompassed a large geographic region with a great deal of cultural and ethnic diversity. But the more important point to consider in this regard is that the modern divisions of Europe (or even the modern conventions of borders) simply didn't apply in the Middle Ages. And for that matter, the application of the term "English," as in the case of this lecture, may not even be appropriate in the medieval context. What would make an "English" castle, and how would that be differentiated from a French, German, or Italian castle? Is it a castle that is constructed in the modern country mentioned? If that is the case, then what about castles that were under English control in what is now France? And for that matter, what if a castle is built by a certain "national" or "ethnic" group in a hostile territory? So the real question becomes: is it possible to denote particular features of castles that are particular to regions and people that would allow us to make this distinction? The Kingdom of England, of course, is the best example of this problem. During the reign of the Angevin kings of England in the twelfth century, the Kingdom of England was just one piece of a wider empire that included large parts of France, Wales, Ireland, and Scotland. The kings were more often than not of French extraction and even French speaking; they were thus often very different from the subjects that they ruled in terms of language and culture. These subjects would likely have not even seen themselves as "English," but rather residents of their local town.

So, why consider castles along national lines? Frankly, it is easier. The scholarship and research on castles over the last century has generally been along national lines, such that the castles of France, even if built by King Richard of England, are generally studied by French scholars. We've already looked at a few different English castles as exemplars, because those castles are readily researched in documentary sources. In this lecture, we will consider one in particular that is indicative of the issues just discussed: Dover Castle.

King John of England likely goes down as one of the weaker kings of medieval England because he was frankly unprepared to manage the empire that was thrust upon him. His father, Henry II, had intended to divide his empire between his four sons (with John becoming Lord of Ireland). But this plan did not really work out, and when ultimately Richard I died without an

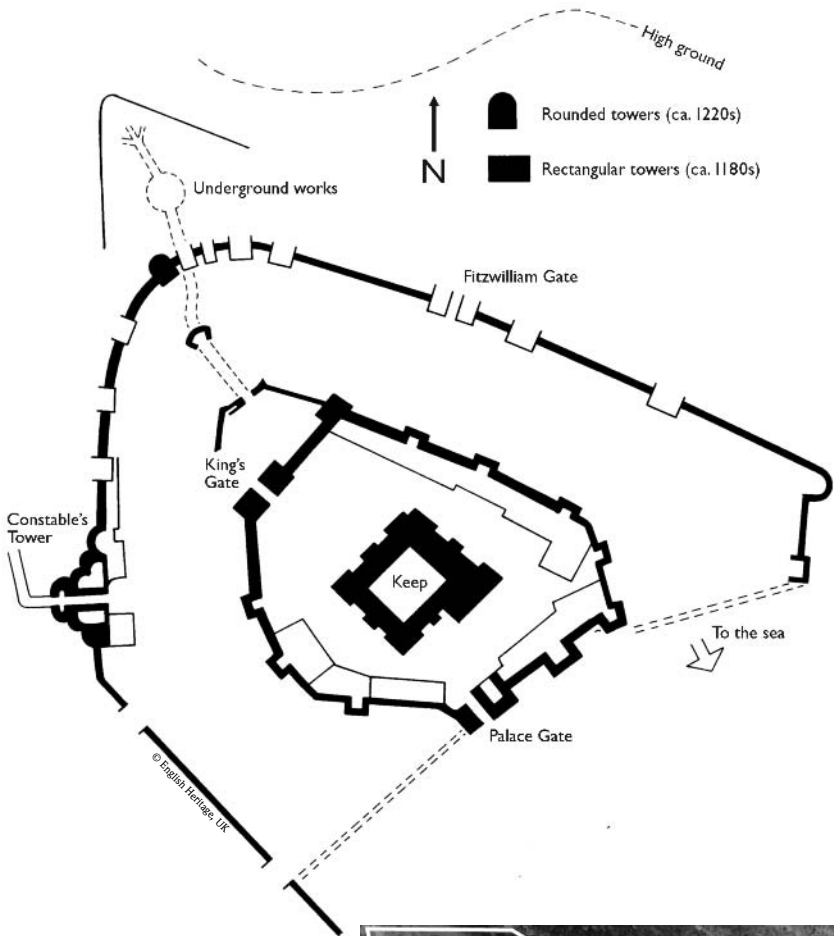
heir, John became king. From the outset of his reign in 1199, John did not have widespread support among the nobility, since he was nowhere near the military leader that his brother was. He did not have the support of the Church; Pope Innocent III excommunicated him in 1212 as a result of the investiture controversy. But perhaps more importantly John was unable to compete with his cross-channel rival, King Philip of France. As Philip brought more and more lands on the continent under his control, English lords who held lands in both regions became increasingly suspect of John. When John was forced to sign Magna Carta in 1215 and later denied the document, many of the nobles invited King Philip of France to serve as king. He was crowned in London in 1216, and the resulting civil war became known as “the Baron’s War.”

Philip understood that to control England as an invader he had to control key castles along the English Channel, the most important being Dover Castle. Dover has always been a strategic point because it is the location of the shortest distance between England and the European Continent. A motte was constructed at the site of a Roman lighthouse by William the Conqueror, but Henry II was the king who constructed the massive keep at the site. The keep is similar to that at the Tower of London, and it has four corner towers that were later added for protection. The inner wall of defenses was built at the end of the twelfth century. It has twelve towers, all of which are open to the interior of the courtyard. A barbican (an outer defensive structure) was added to protect the main gate oriented to London, and a further line of defenses was added outside the interior wall. Philip’s son laid siege to Dover and tried to attack the castle from the north, from an outer barbican hastily constructed. The castle held, despite efforts to undermine the outer gate. This likely explains one of the reasons why Philip could not hold much land in England after the death of John.



The Constable's Gate at Dover Castle looking south toward the English Channel from the access road.

© Shutterstock.com



This recent aerial view of Dover Castle, Kent, England, compares well to the castle situation shown in a diagram describing its layout at the time of the siege of 1216 (top).



FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING

Questions

1. How is Dover an important castle to England?
2. Why is it somewhat difficult to really talk about “English” castles?

Suggested Reading

Platt, Colin. *The Castle in Medieval England and Wales*. New York: Scribner Book Company, 1982.

Other Books of Interest

Noonan, Damien. *Castles & Ancient Monuments of England: The County-by-County Guide to More Than 350 Historic Sites*. London: Aurum Press, 1999.

Pounds, Norman John Greville. *The Medieval Castle in England and Wales: A Political and Social History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.

Websites of Interest

1. English Heritage provides a detailed website about Dover Castle. — <http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/daysout/properties/dover-castle/#Right>
2. The BBC website features an article from July 2009 entitled “King’s Tower of ‘Bling’ Recreated,” which discusses the renovations and installations of new furnishings carried out by English Heritage to King Henry II’s Great Tower at Dover. — http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/england/kent/8177387.stm

Lecture 10

The Castles of Wales

The Suggested Reading for this lecture is Arnold J. Taylor's *The Welsh Castles of Edward I*.

The Welsh Princes always had a very uneasy relationship with the kings of England, but particularly so after the Norman Invasion in 1066. The new Norman kings and lords expanded their control right up to the border with Wales, but the bottom line was that the topography of Wales was not very conducive to military campaigns. The hilly and forested landscape did more to help the Welsh than the English-Normans, who preferred to stage campaigns using heavily mounted cavalry.

A number of Welsh revolts took place in the late thirteenth century, effectively under the Llywellyn family of northern Wales. This family received mixed support from the native Welsh. Additionally, though the frontier region between England and Wales, known as “the Marches,” was ruled by Anglo-Norman lords who received special rights as Marcher lords to entice them to rule. They could hold their own courts, and in some cases created their own “March Law” that was a mixture of Welsh and English law. The idea on the part of the English kings was to use these Marcher lords as buffers between the Kingdom of England proper and the Welsh.

Things took a turn for the worse when King Edward I of England insisted that the Welsh had to give up their native law in favor of English law. They had to further recognize him as their king. For Edward, it was an issue of finally dealing with a thorn in his side while he was trying to deal with France and Scotland. In the 1280s, though, after repeated revolts, he applied a new strategy: encircle the recalcitrant Welsh with a line of castles, forcing the Welsh into the mountains of northern Wales.

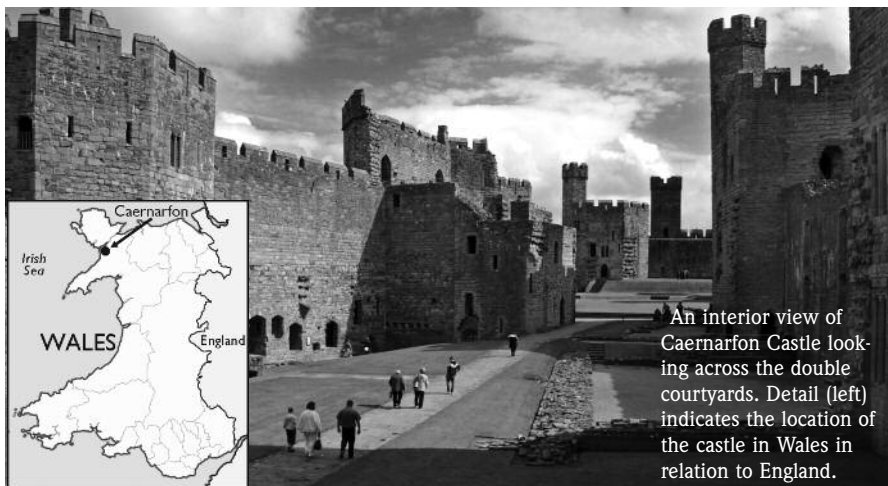
As mentioned in a previous lecture, the Edwardian castles of Wales are of a whole different category and size relative to other castles in England. Caernarfon Castle is an important castle to consider in this regard because it had very clear military strengths, but it was also a very clear social statement to the Welsh. The site was chosen to control the straits between Wales and the Isle of Anglesey, which provided agricultural produce



An aerial view of Caernarfon Castle, 2009.

to Wales itself. Edward recaptured a motte and bailey from the Welsh that had been built in 1090 by Norman settlers and then decided to construct a major castle at the site. The castle was constructed with a new town that was encircled by a wall. The castle is located on the southern wall of the town and is divided into two courtyards. Access to the first was controlled by a gatehouse that entered the castle from the town. Two towers protected that gate, and eight other towers lined the walls. A large ditch was fed water from a nearby river. The castle was designed from scratch, and while it has a number of unique features (such as the striped masonry on the exterior walls), it is not as well designed as later concentric castles. It has multiple layers of defense, but it is almost as if this happened less by design than accident. Another interesting feature of the castle is that unlike, say, Dover Castle, Caernarfon was designed with less “lordship” in mind than military tactics. It was designed to withstand a siege, and it did not have a keep.

Harlech, like Caernarfon, was constructed by Edward as part of his Welsh campaign. But by the time it was constructed in 1283, castle technology had so dramatically changed that it does not seem very similar at all to Caernarfon. Designed by master architect James of St. George, the castle took seven years to build. Truly designed to be a concentric castle, the multiple lines of defense ultimately led to one of the most heavily defended gatehouses ever constructed in a castle. The gate is flanked by two massive drum towers, which then housed a series of doors, gates, and murder-holes. Presuming one could make their way into the gate, they would be faced with a barrage of firepower at every step. The outer defenses of the castles were hewn of rock, preventing undermining. Again, like Caernarfon, Harlech does not have a keep. And, again like Caernarfon, Harlech might be seen as more of a military outpost than lordly castle, so the need for facilities typically associated with a castle were not only not needed but would have likely caused a weakness in the overall design.



An interior view of Caernarfon Castle looking across the double courtyards. Detail (left) indicates the location of the castle in Wales in relation to England.

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FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING

Questions

1. Why did Wales pose particular challenges to the English kings?
2. How was castle building part of the strategy of Edward I in his attempts to control Wales?

Suggested Reading

Taylor, Arnold J. *The Welsh Castles of Edward I*. London: Hambledon Press, 1984.

Other Books of Interest

Pounds, Norman John Greville. *The Medieval Castle in England and Wales: A Political and Social History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.

Williams, Diane M., and John R. Kenyon. *The Impact of the Edwardian Castles in Wales*. Oakville, CT: Oxbow Books, 2010.

Websites of Interest

1. Cadw is the historic environment service of the Welsh Assembly Government. “Cadw” (pronounced *cad-oo*) is a Welsh word meaning “to keep.” The website features a list of publicly owned and maintained heritage sites in Wales. —
<http://www.cadw.wales.gov.uk/default.asp?id=6&lang=placestovisit>
2. The *Castles of Wales* website is a personal project of Jeffrey L. Thomas featuring images, drawings, and information about Welsh castles. —
<http://www.castlewales.com/home.html>

Lecture 11

Castles of Ireland and Scotland

The Suggested Reading for this lecture is Tom McNeill's *Castles in Ireland: Feudal Power in a Gaelic World*.

By the late twelfth century, Ireland was controlled by a number of local kings and warlords, some of whom were able to muster enough political and military support among their peers to make the claim of "High King of Ireland." Few were able to really deliver on that title, and when one of those kings asked King Henry II of England to support him in his claim against rival kings, the history of Ireland and England became inextricably linked for the subsequent centuries.

The Anglo-Norman lords who came to Ireland in the late twelfth century were very different from the Gaelic lords. They were part of a wider Norman culture that spoke French and built castles, while the native Gaelic lords spoke Irish and rarely constructed castles of a quality similar to the Normans. Based upon the most recent scholarship, it seems that in pre-Norman Ireland, Gaelic lords did build fortifications, but to what extent these buildings are castles in the sense of the terms laid out in the first lecture is a source of great debate in Irish castle studies. Pre-Norman Gaelic lords did build structures such as stone enclosures and temporary military encampments, and they even built bridges and rechanneled rivers to suit their strategic aims. Historians and archaeologists of later medieval Ireland are still hard pressed to define where exactly people lived in the thirteenth century.



The Record Tower (center) is the sole surviving tower of the medieval Dublin Castle dating from ca. 1228. To its right is the Chapel Royal.

The Anglo-Normans who arrived at the end of the twelfth century, on the other hand, established manors and castles as centers of government from the outset. They imported peasants and farmers from England, and in a sense created a “mini-England” in Ireland. The lordships were roughly based upon preexisting Irish boundaries, with the addition of mottes, castles, towns, and churches. The colony maintained a headquarters in Dublin, which of course necessitated the construction of a suitable castle in the city.

Dublin had already existed for about three hundred years as one of the more important Viking settlements in Europe. By 1200, though, the Anglo-Normans realized that the walls defending the city were inadequate, as the Irish continued to attack and burn the city. King John built a castle at the site in 1204, and in some ways we can see a castle very similar in design to Caernarfon. The castle was integrated into the town walls, with one tower at each corner of the castle. A gatehouse provided access from the town, but neither this gatehouse nor the walls themselves survive today. One tower, the Record Tower, still exists, but excavations in the later part of the twentieth century confirmed the historical documentation related to the site.

Dublin Castle became *the* royal castle in Ireland. It housed the King’s Court in Ireland, and it also housed the King’s Treasury. The Justiciar, the king’s personal representative in Ireland, also maintained a hall in the castle. In short, it was a symbol of English rule from a very early age.

The castle at Trim, County Meath, is one of the largest in Ireland. Built by Hugh de Lacy (who had defended Dover Castle against the French), Trim originally began as an earthen fortification. In 1204, Walter de Lacy constructed a stone castle at the site. Central to the castle is a large keep of roughly cruciform shape, with over twenty corners. It is a very imposing



Trim Castle on the banks of the Boyne River in County Meath is the largest Anglo-Norman castle in Ireland and was used as a location in the film *Braveheart*.

keep, but the point remains that the design does not seem to make much defensive sense. The keep was likely designed with a greater social concept than military concept. It was not defensible aside from the wooden door entrance. The corners would have been susceptible to battering rams, and almost immediately after it was finished the de Lacys built a curtain wall around the keep.

Gaelic lords, it would seem, did not build castles comparable to Norman lords. But it does seem to be the case that increasingly over the twelfth century Gaelic lords increasingly started to reoccupy a number of prehistoric sites as lordly centers. Crannogs, fortified islands prominent in the central part of the island, are often early medieval in date. They were typically used as islands of last resort, with the Gaels bringing their cattle on the island when attacked. The defenses of these crannogs were not elaborate, with timber or whicker walls being most popular. It is also now apparent that some Gaelic lords built earthen and timber fortifications that were, in a sense, very similar to stone castles and seem to have served the same purpose overall. The royal house at Cloonfree, County Roscommon, was constructed around 1300 by the O'Connor dynasty as a capital of sorts. It is not very complicated: it is a twenty-five-meter-square enclosure with a ditch.

Not much is there today, but a number of praise poems talk about the site as “the Troy of Ireland” and give us a very clear idea of the complicated timber defenses that may have existed at the site.

By the fifteenth century, though, we can witness a great shift in the construction habits of the Gaelic lords. It is around this time that they begin to construct what are known as “tower houses,” one of the more

A modern reconstruction of a crannog at Craggaunowen, County Clare (top), and the remains of Aughnanure tower house and bawn (defensive wall) in County Galway. It has been estimated that there were more than eight thousand tower houses in Ireland at one time.



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popular styles of castles in all of Ireland, with over two thousand examples extant. Tower houses are fairly similar in design. They are usually three or four stories tall, with a single chamber on each floor. The entrance is usually on the ground floor, with moderate defenses located immediately over the door. Access to upper floors are controlled by stairs and doors, and in most cases the top floors were used as residential space and a hall for the lord.

In Scotland, we see a somewhat similar line of development as in Ireland. Unlike Wales and Ireland, though, Scotland already had a well-developed and well-maintained monarchy at the arrival of the Normans. From 1100 to 1286 the Scottish crown maintained an unbroken line. At the death of Alexander III in 1286 without an heir, Edward I of England was called in to arbitrate. Edward, sensing an opportunity, invaded Scotland in 1296. His first act at the invasion was to order that all castles be put under his rule. In response, a number of Scottish nobles revolted. Edward's strategy in Scotland was very different than in Wales (where no castles existed). Edward wanted to control access to the Highlands by controlling supply lines and roads that were controlled by castles.

Stirling Castle was likely constructed on a prehistoric site, but it gains importance in the twelfth century as the Scottish kings increasingly use it as a royal castle. In 1294, it was occupied by Edward, who captured it when the Scots abandoned the castle. It is difficult to see the medieval origins of the castle today, as the castle itself was continually used as a military barracks up until relatively recently. It occupies a naturally occurring stone hill and overlooks the River Forth. The significance of the location of the castle was made manifest when the Scots defeated the English at the Battle of Stirling Bridge not far away.

But the victory of the Scots was somewhat short lived, in that Edward continued to lay siege to castle after castle in southern Scotland. Bothwell Castle, constructed by the Murray family around 1200, was a walled castle with six towers at the corners. The main tower in the southwest corner served as a keep and was the last part of the castle to hold out against Edward in 1298. The outer walls had been breached by the use of a giant trebuchet. A siege tower was constructed, which was then brought up to the keep, forcing the collapse of the defense. The castle was held by the English until after the Battle of Bannockburn in 1314.



The remaining tower at Bothwell Castle, Lanarkshire, Scotland.

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FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING

Questions

1. How is castle building similar or different in Ireland and Scotland?
2. In what ways did the English use castles in their attempts to subdue the Irish and the Scots?

Suggested Reading

McNeill, Tom. *Castles in Ireland: Feudal Power in a Gaelic World*. New York: Routledge, 2000.

Other Books of Interest

Finan, Thomas J. *Medieval Lough Cé: History, Archaeology, and Landscape*. Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2010.

Fitzgerald, Mairéad Ashe. *Castles of Ireland*. Dublin: O'Brien Press, 2007.

Henderson, Elaine. *Castles of Scotland*. Collins Gem. New York: HarperCollinsPublishers, 1999.

Websites of Interest

1. Ireland and Scotland are home to many castles. A good starting point to find castles by location are the links in Wikipedia's "List of Castles in Ireland" and "List of Castles in Scotland." —
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_castles_in_Ireland
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Castles_in_Scotland
2. Heritage Ireland provides a website about Dublin Castle. —
<http://www.heritageireland.ie/en/Dublin/DublinCastle>
3. The *Castle Explorer* website features short articles on castles in Scotland and the United Kingdom. — <http://www.castlexplorer.co.uk/maps.php>

Lecture 12

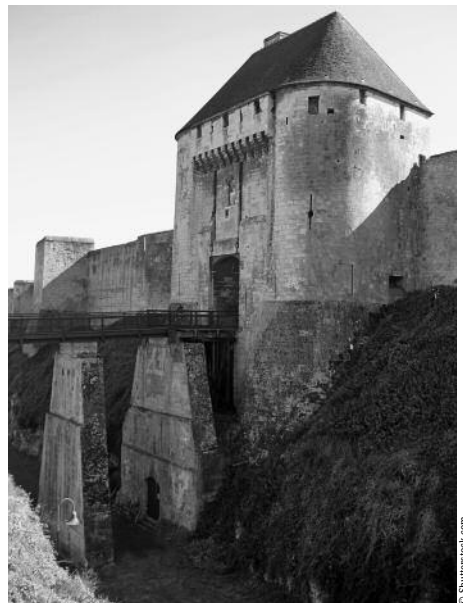
Castles in France

The Suggested Reading for this lecture is Jean Mesqui's *Châteaux-forts et fortifications en France*.

As we have mentioned in our previous two lectures that are concerned with castles within particular national-geographic boundaries, there is obviously a great deal of variation in France in terms of the types of castles that we find there today. This fact presents itself in terms of spatial variability (for example, the kinds of castles found in Normandy as opposed to those in Gascony) and of temporal variability (those constructed in the ninth century as opposed to those in the fifteenth century).

As we might recall from previous lectures, Normandy was in a very odd position in relation to the King of England and the King of France. In 1066, William the Conqueror, Duke of Normandy, became King of England. At the same time, as Duke of Normandy, William held Normandy as a subject of the King of France. In theory this meant that the King of France could call upon the King of England to swear fealty; in practice, this never really happened, but it was the implication of the King of England potentially being called to Paris that caused Normandy to be such a sore subject between the two kingdoms. Normandy is thus a very real “frontier” region in medieval Europe, in that the topography and landscape of the duchy put it in a position where it could just as easily be accessed from England via the English Channel or from Paris. Normandy remained in the hands of the King of England until it was forcibly taken by Phillip of France in 1204. Up until that time, Henry II and Richard I of England made great efforts to fortify the region, both over and against rival lords and against the King of France. The region became hotly contested as part of the Hundred Years War.

But, just as in the Second World War, access in and out of Normandy was constrained by a limited number of roads that led to Paris from the coast. Caen Castle was constructed at a very strategic

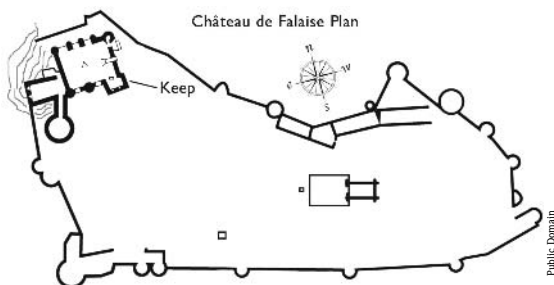


The main gate at Caen Castle, Normandy.

road juncture by William the Conqueror, but this castle was expanded by Henry I when he added a keep and a large hall. When Phillip received the castle in 1204, he reinforced the outer walls and added more elaborate concentric defenses. Most of the present walls date to the fifteenth century, when it was again refortified during the final phases of the Hundred Years War. Of great note at the castle is the gatehouse constructed by Phillip. It replaced the original entrance to the enclosure wall, and while it is not of the quality of later concentric castles with massive gatehouses, it is very clear that Phillip intended to create a dense defense with multiple layers of controlled access. The Exchequer Palace was constructed as the main residence of Henry I in Normandy, and it is a two-floor building with the castle courtyard. It is not a keep by any stretch; it is a lordly hall, with a fair amount of natural light provided by windows inserted along the walls.

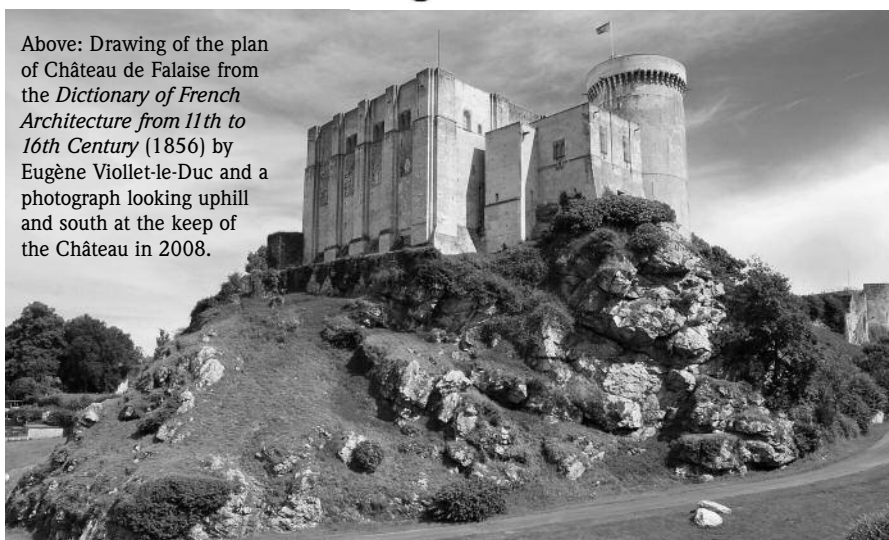
At Château de Falaise we see another Norman castle that began as a William the Conqueror motte and bailey that later developed into a more elaborate stone castle. Falaise was located at a point where roads met before entering Normandy. The Falaise Gap has always been a strategic landscape, from the Middle Ages up to the Second World War. It was the strategic breakout point for the

Allied forces coming out of Normandy after D-Day and was a pivotal crossroads in the Hundred Years War. The castle presently has two keeps, one constructed by Henry I, somewhat ironically influenced by the



Public Domain

Above: Drawing of the plan of Château de Falaise from the *Dictionary of French Architecture from 11th to 16th Century* (1856) by Eugène Viollet-le-Duc and a photograph looking uphill and south at the keep of the Château in 2008.



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Norman keeps that were constructed early on in England. When Phillip acquired the castle in 1204 he added a second keep. The tower added by Phillip is a round tower that overlooks the rest of the castle. While constructed as a defensive feature, it is also an impressive addition to the castle, perched atop a mound near the town.

Journeying to the south of France we enter a slightly different realm. The castle at Montségur, in southern France, was the last holdout of a group of heretics generally referred to as “Cathars.” It is very difficult to pinpoint exactly what the Cathars believed, but it is safe to say that they were primarily a strictly dualistic sect of Christianity that denied basic teachings and tenets of the Christian faith. Pope Innocent III tried to deal with them by sending legates to reeducate the lapsed Christians, but when one of the legates was murdered in 1208, Innocent declared that the land and holdings of these heretics were subject to confiscation by secular lords, and that there was a responsibility on the part of the French secular lords to bring order to the region. What ensued was an internal crusade that culminated in the siege of the mountaintop castle at Montségur.

Montségur is a relatively small castle, with a rectangular keep and polygonal courtyard. The walls are relatively thin, but these facts belie the true defensive position of the castle. In 1243, French forces made their way to the castle. Rather than try to storm the castle immediately, the French decided to starve out the Cathars, expecting that they did not have much in the way of food reserves. However, because the French could not cordon off the castle entirely, the local population continued to supply the castle at night. Within ten months the invading force had grown to around 10,000. The topography thwarted attempts to bring up siege weapons, until a neighboring mountaintop was scaled and engineers were able to construct catapults or trebuchet. The Cathars also smuggled in an engineer, who helped them to build a catapult. Eventually, though, the French were able to batter down the main gate and force the inhabitants to surrender after a nearly two-year-long siege. The inhabitants of the castle were condemned as heretics and allowed themselves to be burned at the stake.

Ruins of Château de Montségur

Precariously perched at a three-thousand-foot altitude in the south of France, Montségur is located in the heart of France’s Languedoc-Midi-Pyrénées region southwest of Carcassonne. Montségur dominates a rock formation known as a *pog*—a term derived from the local Occitan dialect—*puog*, or *puog*, meaning peak, hill, or mountain. This picture is a view from about a thousand feet below the summit.



FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING

Questions

1. Why was Normandy so important to both the English and French kings?
2. What are some regional differences in French castles?

Suggested Reading

Mesqui, Jean. *Châteaux-forts et fortifications en France*. Paris: Flammarion, 1997.

Other Books of Interest

Cowper, Marcus. *Cathar Castles: Fortresses of the Albigensian Crusade 1209–1300*. Colchester, Essex, UK: Osprey Publishing, 2006.

Polidori, Robert, and Jean-Marie Perouse de Montclos. *Châteaux of the Loire Valley*. Potsdam, Germany: H.F. Ullmann, 2008.

Websites of Interest

1. France is home to many castles. A good starting point to find castles by location is Wikipedia's "List of Castles of France." — http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_castles_in_France
2. *Château Guillaume Le Conquérant Falaise* is the website for Château de Falaise. — http://www.chateau-guillaume-leconquerant.fr/index_uk.php

Lecture 13

Crusader Castles

The Suggested Reading for this lecture is Ronnie Ellenblum's *Crusader Castles and Modern Histories*.

In this lecture we turn away from Europe and consider a few castles constructed in the Holy Land as a result of the medieval Crusading movement. The Crusades were a series of religiously motivated military incursions in the Near and Middle East by high-level nobility of Europe. Notably, the lords and kings of France, England, and the Holy Roman Empire participated in the Crusades. The initial intent of the Crusades was to provide safe access to the holy sites in Jerusalem and to protect the Byzantine Empire from a group of people recently absorbed into Islam, the Seljuk Turks.

In some sense, it is difficult to imagine the motivation for individuals who journeyed thousands of miles, only to be met with a very hostile environment and enemy. But several different factors led to the very idea of the Crusades. First, by this time, the Christian tradition had developed a fairly clear concept of a “just war,” and fighting in a war to protect Christendom was considered just such a war. We might also consider the medieval concept of the remission of sins through hardship and pilgrimage, since Pope Urban II (who called the First Crusade) assured the lords that their sins would be forgiven for undertaking this journey.

The overall logistics involved with crusading are somewhat staggering, and it becomes very clear when reading the evidence that this was not a venture undertaken lightly or by some from the lower levels of society, let alone the poor or peasants. A knight or lord who journeyed to the Holy Land had to pay for all of his equipment and food, and the equipment and food of his underlings. He had to provide transportation for his retinue and horses. And he had to make sure that his own holdings in his native land were well maintained and managed by either a trusted family member or friend.

An illustration from a fifteenth-century manuscript showing Pope Urban II blessing the Crusaders at Clermont (France) in 1095 after calling the First Crusade. The assembled knights responded with “Deus vult!” (“God Wills It!”).



In the First Crusade, the Europeans made their way to Constantinople, a city fortified by the Roman Emperor Constantine in the fifth century. Subsequent emperors expanded on the defenses, but the central defenses of the city were a series of walls built across the neck of the peninsula where the city was founded. These walls were larger than anything in Europe at the time and had to have been overwhelming to knights who were used to earthen and timber castles. After the Europeans left Constantinople they made their way to Jerusalem via Nicaea and Antioch, and they laid siege to each of these cities—a precursor to the massive siege of the city of Jerusalem.

After the fall of Jerusalem, many of the Crusaders returned to Europe. But a good number stayed and formed new kingdoms. And like any good medieval kingdom, these newly established territories needed castles. The people who came from Europe to the Holy Land originated from a number of different regions of Europe, each with their own ideas about fortifications. The Anglo-Normans preferred to build rectangular keeps, while the French preferred to build round keeps. The Belgians built a number of fortifications along the ridge lines of their holdings. But what is clear is that the techniques were generally applied to particular kinds of topography.

During the twentieth century, Crusader castles received a great deal more attention than did castles in Europe. The Crusader castles were much more military than residential or administrative, and the individuals who surveyed the castles during the first part of the twentieth century were often military civil servants working for European governments. We also have a large volume of chronicles relating to the Crusades that give explicit details about the



The Crusader fortress of Belvoir is located on a hill of the Naphtali plateau, about thirteen miles south of the Sea of Galilee and about one thousand six hundred feet above the Jordan Valley. The Hospitallers withstood an eighteen-month siege by Muslim forces in the fortress before it fell in January 1189.

tactical use of castles. But perhaps most importantly it is clear that castles in the Holy Land directly influenced castle architecture in Europe as a result of the Crusaders returning to Europe with their experiences.

The lords of the Crusader states were almost immediately under threat from neighboring Islamic kingdoms. The newly established kingdoms occupied the more fertile strip of land between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea. The nobles established a network of castles along the frontier, with the weakest link in the chain being the eastern border of the Crusader kingdom of Jerusalem. Belvoir Castle was acquired by the Hospitaller Knights in 1168 to bolster the defenses. The Hospitaller Knights were a group of religious knights who shared the features of being both monks and warriors. They were the elite of the European knights in the Holy Land, and they were well endowed with resources to build strong defenses at Belvoir. They modified the castle, creating a large fortress with multiple lines of defenses. The castle has a central courtyard with a main inner stronghold, but then it also has three layers of walls with corner towers and a well-defended entrance that winds the visitor through confusing halls. It has been argued that Belvoir may be an example of one of the first concentric castles purposefully built in that manner; however, it should be noted that the Hospitallers likely borrowed the idea from Islamic military architecture of the era. The *castra* was a term used to describe defended cisterns and watchtowers, and these *castra* are very similar in shape to the castle at Belvoir.

But perhaps one of the greatest of the Crusader castles, and indeed one of the greatest medieval castles of all, is Krak des Chevalier. It was the headquarters of the Hospitaller Knights in the Holy Land, and it had originally been built by Muslims until the Hospitallers took it over in 1142. It is a massive castle, with walls that are in some cases over one hundred feet thick. Each corner of the walls in the castle are fortified with a tower that provides flanking fire and positions to mount siege engines. The inner walls of the castle are significantly higher than the outer walls, providing a further base of covering fire for the outer walls. It, too, shares many of the features that we associate with a concentric castle, and it was designed as such.

A view of the east moat and thick wall base at the ruins of the Krak des Chevalier near the present Syrian-Lebanese border.



But this leads to a very important question for castle historians, and that is the true relationship between Crusader castles and castles in Europe. It is clear that in theory concentric defense was already being used, for instance, in all castle defenses, including earth and timber fortifications. Around this time gatehouses were increasingly used as a means of providing and preventing access to the central courtyard of castles. And while it is true that the Crusaders likely brought back ideas about siege weapons and tactics, the particular pieces of castle architecture seem to have been in place in Europe at the same time. However, the real impact was that the architecture was combined in such a way as to provide defense against siege weapons, and the architecture was then employed by those who went on Crusade. It is no surprise, then, that Edward I's massive castle-building campaign in Wales followed his visit to Krak des Chevalier.

Located east of present-day Tartus, Syria, in the Homs Gap atop a two-thousand-foot-high hill, the Krak des Chevalier sat along the only route from Antioch to Beirut and the Mediterranean Sea. It was one of many fortresses that were part of a defensive network along the border of the Crusader states. The fortress controlled the road to the Mediterranean, and from this base, the Hospitallers could exert some influence over Lake Homs to the east to control the fishing industry and watch for Muslim armies gathering in Syria.

At the right, a view of an interior corridor along the main courtyard, and below, a view from atop the southern wall into the castle.



Both images: © Shutterstock.com

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING

Questions

1. How did the Crusaders learn from their experience in the Holy Land in terms of castles?
2. How did Islamic architecture influence castle architecture?

Suggested Reading

Ellenblum, Ronnie. *Crusader Castles and Modern Histories*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.

Other Books of Interest

Kennedy, Hugh. *Crusader Castles*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

Molin, Kristian. *Unknown Crusader Castles*. London: Hambledon & London, 2003.

Recorded Books

Madden, Thomas F. *"God Wills It!": Understanding the Crusades*. The Modern Scholar Series. Prince Frederick, MD: Recorded Books, LLC, 2005.

Websites of Interest

1. The *Saudi Aramco World* magazine website provides an article entitled "The Castles of the Crusaders" by Robin Fedden, which originally appeared in May/June 1970. —
<http://www.saudiaramcoworld.com/issue/197003/the.castles.of.the.crusaders.htm>
2. The *Wall Street Journal* features an article by Christian C. Sahner from January 2009 entitled "A Medieval Castle in the Middle East," about the Krak des Chevalier. —
<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB123335398205734847.html>
3. A personal website by Dick Osseman features a 270-picture tour of the Krak des Chevalier. —
http://www.pbase.com/dosseman_syria/krak

Lecture 14

The End of Castles

The Suggested Reading for this lecture is Christopher Duffy's *Siege Warfare: The Fortress in the Early Modern World, 1494–1660*.

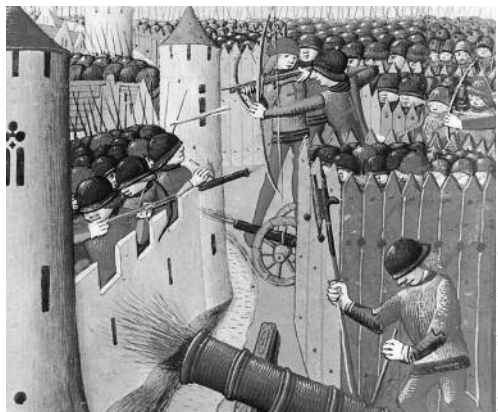
In this course we have examined the history and archaeology of the castle in medieval Europe. We have considered the various types of castles and have discussed the main parts of a castle in terms of the living space, the administrative space, and, of course, the military function. We have looked at castles in a number of national and regional settings in Europe. But as we come to the conclusion of this course, there is one lingering question to consider: Why are castles unique to the Middle Ages, and with the end of the Middle Ages, why are castles not built?

There is, of course, a rather obvious answer to the question, and in most texts of military history you will find that answer in one word: gunpowder. In other words, castles, particularly as they were constructed in the later Middle Ages, simply could not stand up to even the most primitive and rudimentary cannons and mortars of the fourteenth century. Gunpowder was first widely used in a military context in Europe during the Hundred Years War between France and England; one of the first real images of the use of a cannon in a siege comes from around 1429. The image depicts the siege of Orleans and shows two cannons firing at the walls, while other soldiers occupy siege towers and other siege weapons. Both sides use bows and crossbows. And herein lies our problem: while cannons and gunpowder were certainly used widely in warfare at this time, something else was happening in society that really caused the collapse of true castle building.

Thomas Malthus, the eighteenth-century economist, argued that, in general, populations tend to grow at geometric rates (2, 4, 8, 16), while production tends to grow at an arithmetic rate (2, 4, 6, 8). While other factors can contribute to the fluctuations in both population and production, such as weather and climate, technology, or politics, what is important to note about his point is that there is a necessary relationship between a population and its ability to

Siege of Orleans, 1429

Detail of an illustration from *Les Vigiles de Charles VII* by Martial d'Auvergne, ca. 1477 to 1483.



© Clipart.com/Musee de l'Armee, Paris

feed itself, and that a multitude of other factors play into the equation. Scientists now know that the eleventh through thirteenth centuries were relatively mild all across Europe, and that agricultural output increased as a result. This then led to a population rise, which fed into the overall structure of feudal society, since it meant that more peasants were available to grow more food. However, by the fourteenth century, the climate of Europe cooled and became much more wet. The land, already overused in terms of production, yielded less and less food, until ultimately a widespread famine occurred around 1315 across Europe. Estimates suggest that around 10 to 20 percent of the population perished in this famine; but the longer-term consequences were more devastating, because the population itself was, in a sense, “weaker” in successive generations, as the land continued to produce less and less food. In fact, we might even argue that the famine laid the groundwork for the arrival of the worst calamity of the Middle Ages, the Black Death, in the 1340s. The Black Death, or bubonic plague, was likely a combination of different illnesses that impacted the population of Europe for the next hundred years or so. As much as 60 percent of the population of Europe perished in a relatively short period of time.

These two huge social calamities impacted societies and economies, more so because the lower classes of society died in such high numbers. If we were to imagine the structure of feudal society as a pyramid, with the king at the top and peasants at the bottom, we might further say that the pyramid collapsed in the mid-fourteenth century. Fewer numbers of workers in fields created a higher demand for labor, and as a result wages often increased. Therefore, in a social sense, the castle era ended because feudalism ended. Without one, you cannot have the other.

Returning now to gunpowder. The advent of the use of gunpowder was very similar to the first use of the longbow a century or so earlier. A weapon in the hands of someone trained to use it could be used to kill a knight, who, up until this point, had enjoyed a level of supremacy on the battlefield due to a knight’s heavy armor. In the hands of most ignorant and

poor peasants, though, a “handy bombard,” one of the first hand-held guns, could easily kill any foe. By 1450, cannons had developed into particular forms explicitly

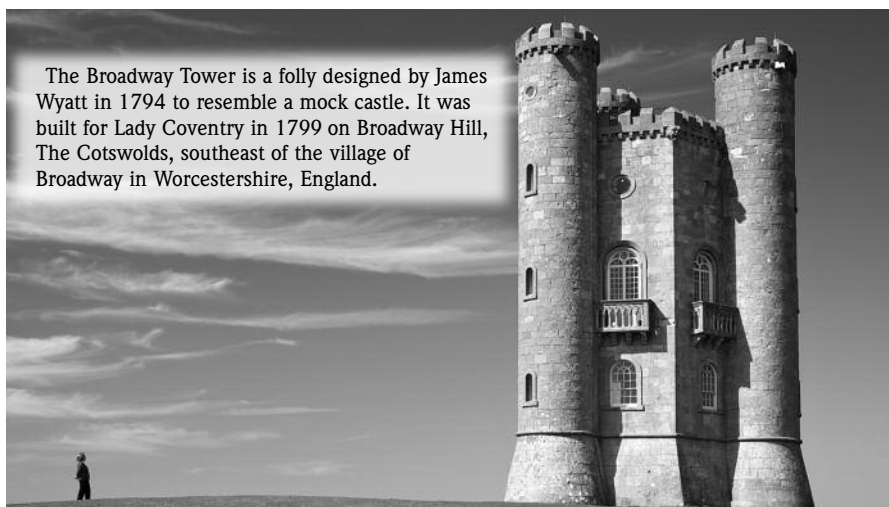


An illustration of what is often interpreted as a depiction of the Black Death from the Toggenburg Bible, ca. 1411.

designed for siege warfare or open-field combat. Siege cannons could easily launch projectiles of up to five hundred pounds. Such projectiles would easily destroy the thickest of castle walls.

The bottom line is that medieval castle walls, which had been getting higher and higher and thicker and thicker through the Middle Ages to deal with siege weapons and ladders, were now a liability (if not a perfect target). Another point to consider, though, is that the walls of the castle were also unable to hold cannons because of the shock and vibrations of the explosions! A cannon placed on top of a tall drum tower could easily rock the tower to rubble. In response to these developments, military architects in the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries begin to design forts to hold massive numbers of cannons. Deal Castle in England is such an example. The faces of the fort are all rounded, and there were enough spots in the walls to hold around one hundred and fifty cannons. But Deal Castle, like other gun forts of this era and later, are most certainly not castles.

Throughout the Middle Ages, the castle served both a social and military function, and both components were necessary. Fortifications are still built today; while the Second World War introduced the full extent of mechanized warfare at a speed that was unprecedented, in the latter half of the twentieth century forts were constructed in Vietnam, Afghanistan, and Iraq that have many similarities physically to earthen forts of the Middle Ages. But what is missing, of course, is the social context. During the Romantic Era in Europe in the nineteenth century, many people deserted the cities to build new castles (now called “follies”) in the wilderness. These folly castles *appear* to be castles as we have described, but they are often designed to look like what people assumed a castle should look like and have no military component to them whatsoever.



The Broadway Tower is a folly designed by James Wyatt in 1794 to resemble a mock castle. It was built for Lady Coventry in 1799 on Broadway Hill, The Cotswolds, southeast of the village of Broadway in Worcestershire, England.

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING

Questions

1. Why don't we build real castles in the modern world?
2. What are some of the reasons that explain the end of castle building?

Suggested Reading

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Other Books of Interest

Norris, John. *Early Gunpowder Artillery 1300–1600*. Ramsbury, Marlborough, Wiltshire: The Crowood Press, Ltd., 2003.

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Websites of Interest

1. The *Xenophon Group: Military History Database* website provides a detailed description of the Siege of Orleans (1428–1429) and the Loire Valley Campaign (1429) during the Hundred Years War, famous for the participation of Jeanne d'Arc (Joan of Arc) and the use of cannon. — <http://xenophongroup.com/montjoie/orleans.htm>
2. The *Broadway and the Cotswolds* website features a section on the Broadway Tower. — <http://www.broadway-cotswolds.co.uk/broadwaytower.html>

COURSE MATERIALS

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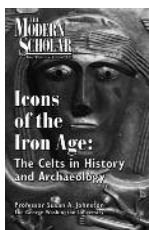
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**These books are available online through www.modernscholar.com
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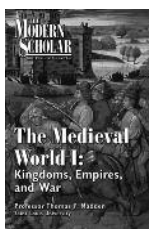
RECORDED BOOKS

The study of history is among the most popular course topics in colleges and universities around the world. The Modern Scholar also offers the following courses on medieval history.



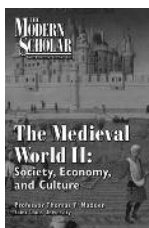
ICONS OF THE IRON AGE: The Celts in History and Archaeology Professor Susan A. Johnston—The George Washington University

A respected professor of anthropology and archaeology, Susan Johnston turns her scholarly eye on one of history's most fascinating peoples: the Celts. Based on the writings of Greek and Roman historians, the archaeological record, and Celtic lore that continues to this day, these lectures delve into Celtic history, art, religion, and warfare. This exploration demonstrates who the Celts were and why so many cultures claim Celtic ancestry. As entertaining as it is informative, *Icons of the Iron Age* also addresses gender roles within the Celts and takes listeners through the Roman invasion of the Celtic peoples.



THE MEDIEVAL WORLD I: Kingdoms, Empires, and War Professor Thomas F. Madden—Saint Louis University

A widely recognized expert on pre-modern history, Professor Thomas F. Madden launches the first of a two-part series on the medieval world. This all-encompassing investigation of a highly influential time period includes the major events of the era and informative discussion of empire, the papacy, the Crusades, and the fall of Constantinople. During the course of these lectures, Professor Madden also addresses the rise of Islam, reform movements, and schisms in the church. In so doing, he underscores the significance and grand scale of an age that continues to hold an undeniable fascination today.



THE MEDIEVAL WORLD II: Society, Economy, and Culture Professor Thomas F. Madden—Saint Louis University

Historian Thomas F. Madden concludes his two-part series on the medieval world in this study of day-to-day life during this time period and the momentous events that occurred during the last centuries of the Medieval Era. With scholarly aplomb, Professor Madden discusses such intriguing topics as the legacy of Rome, Christianity, Gothic architecture, and courtly literature. The course also provides listeners with fresh new insight into two subjects that helped to define the era: the Inquisition and the Black Death.



MASTERPIECES OF MEDIEVAL LITERATURE Professor Timothy B. Shutt—Kenyon College

Medieval literature can be a tough sell. And yet, its bad press is in overwhelming measure undeserved. Medieval literature is full of love and magic, monsters and heroes, cosmic yearnings, and careful assessment of the whole range of social, moral, and personal problems that we confront today. The Middle Ages saw the composition of some of the greatest and most rewarding literary works ever written. In this course, we will look at some of the less well-known works—*Beowulf*, the utterly splendid *Njal's Saga*, and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* among them.

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