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explores .....

Castles
of Great Britain
Volume One

Linda Lee & Laurie Jonas

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Castles of Great Britain
Volume One

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Photographs by Laurie Jonas

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Cover illustration
The impressive gatehouse at Carisbrooke Castle, Isle of Wight

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Introduction

Although various types of fortification existed well before the Norman invasion, this book provides a taste of those classified as 'true' castles built between the eleventh and seventeenth centuries in England and Wales. The purpose-built south coast defences of Henry VIII are a bit of an anomaly, but examples of these are included for their diversity. Scottish castles will be dealt with separately in a future edition as they are too numerous to mention here.

Of the several thousand castles built throughout Great Britain, the majority fall within two basic layouts – either a fortified great tower, or a fortified enclosure. Some were a combination of these two elements, and a good number of early castles were later developed into other forms such as shell enclosure castles. The earliest type of castle is commonly referred to as 'motte and bailey', and these defensive structures were literally thrown up in their hundreds with the arrival of the Normans. Consisting of a mound of earth, flattened at the top to accommodate a timber tower, and having a piece of land at the foot of the mound (the bailey) encircled by a deep ditch, this simple castle became the template from which many of the first stone castles developed. Mottes or mounds are still very much in evidence at many castles around the country, and this distinctive feature is often a good indication when trying to date the castle's origins.

Towards the end of the eleventh century, the first stone castles were erected based around a 'great tower' or three-storey fortified house. At this time, castle building became as individual as the builders involved, using the local craftsmen and materials available, and adapting the designs to fit the limitations of the building site. The first, and largest great stone tower, was erected at Colchester. Originally rising to four storeys, this enormous

structure was considerably reduced in height when the top two storeys were demolished during the seventeenth century. Less than 100 years after the great tower was completed, the unique multangular tower at Orford was built, and survives today in a remarkable state of preservation. The trend to build a 'great tower' as the central feature of the overall castle plan proved to be a successful format, the vertical structure being utilised as both a comfortable family residence and a virtually impregnable 'safe house' in times of threat. Development of early fortified enclosures also took place, these becoming known as shell enclosure castles, and a splendid example of this arrangement is at Restormel Castle where a twelfth century enclosure was added to the existing eleventh century motte.

A whole new chapter of castle building emerged in Wales when Edward began his ambitious programme in the latter part of the thirteenth century. His castles were purpose-built, the sole aim being to impose his presence and power upon the Welsh. To realise his grand visions he employed the skills of an outstanding military architect to supervise the works. Master James of St George was a noted castle builder in Europe, having gained experience in every aspect of the work from designing to engineering. Edward's vast operation was planned in two stages. Firstly, ten major new castles were to be erected, followed by four lesser castles and some remodelling of existing Welsh-built castles. His colossal workforce comprised in the region of 10,000 men, labourers and craftsmen being drafted in from all over England to build these daunting fortresses. It was a staggering achievement, and one that was never repeated. Despite the concentration of Norman and Edwardian castles in Wales, a scattering of Welsh castles originating from the time of Llywelyn the Great can still be found.

From the mid-fourteenth century until the mid-sixteenth century some 100 new castles were erected throughout England and Wales, all individually built for noblemen and landowners. Designs

varied considerably but most of the structures did display some common features. Many were quadrangular in plan, had corner towers set within the curtain walls, and were surrounded by water. Unsurprisingly, several also retained the three or four-storey tower building, and a gatehouse, but the apartments were now generally to be found in separate two-storey ranges. It was during this time that the transition from a military-style fortress to a relatively comfortable fortified home became more apparent. Ornate carvings, 'mock' defensive features, large windows, and even bricks, were incorporated into later castles, aptly demonstrating that they could be not only stylish and comfortable but also practical. However, this certainly did not signify that the need for military fortifications had ceased altogether. In the 1480s Dartmouth Castle was built with the most advanced fortifications in England.

Throughout the Middle Ages the Crown owned more castles than it could maintain and, as a direct consequence, many were simply left to decay. As the country settled into more peaceful times, castles that had fared less well in the preceding years were pulled down, or became used as local quarries. Many others were adapted as country mansions for the aristocracy, and this is possibly why Sir Edward Coke proclaimed in 1623 that "an Englishman's home is his castle". Of course it is not possible to see every surviving castle. Many are still privately owned, but there are hundreds that remain publicly accessible in many guises, including spectacular ruins, delightful country mansions, town museums, and courthouses.

Aberystwyth Castle

In the marvellous sweep of Cardigan Bay stand the ruins of one of Edward I's late thirteenth century castles. Of the seven major English strongholds he established in Wales, Aberystwyth has fared least favourably in the survival stakes. Now little more than a few fragmented chunks of masonry displayed in a well-kept public park, the castle has lost its imposing hold on the town.

At one time guarded by one of the largest Iron Age forts in West Wales, Aberystwyth has been a place of strategic importance throughout history. The first Norman castle, built on a site further south, was begun by Gilbert de Clare but this has long since disappeared, having been destroyed and rebuilt numerous times during 200 years of political and family feuding. When Edward I

begun his castle in 1277, overseen by his brother Edmund, it was a magnificent lozenge-plan concentric building of two stone curtain enclosures, flanked by sturdy round towers. Each curtain had a twin-towered gatehouse, the smaller outer gate leading to a barbican, and the inner gatehouse a substantial fortress with domestic accommodation. Excavations have revealed that a great hall stretched from this gatehouse to the south tower of the inner curtain, some 60ft long (18.3m) and 42ft wide (12.8m).

Even before the building work had been completed, Aberystwyth Castle was destroyed in an attack from Welsh patriots in 1282. The rebuild was supervised by Master Giles of St George, taking a further eight years and vast sums of money. For over 100 years the castle enjoyed a relatively peaceful existence but, in 1403, the castle was captured by Owain Glyndwr. It was briefly restored to the Crown, only to be re-captured by Glyndwr who held it for another five years. It was finally regained by Henry of Monmouth in 1409. Subsequently, with peace restored, Aberystwyth became less significant and was left to deteriorate. Royalists held the position during the Civil War but, following a surrender in 1646, Cromwell ordered the castle to be dismantled.

Open:

Any reasonable time
Free site

OS Grid Ref: SN 579816

Aberystwyth
Ceredigion
West Wales

Tel : n/a

Managed by Aberystwyth Council

Web site : www.aberystwyth.com

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Bamburgh Castle

Dominating a coastal stretch of Northumberland, this substantial castle is sturdily embedded on a rocky outcrop some 150ft (45.5m) above the beach. Bamburgh Castle began as a Saxon stronghold but the history of the site goes back further than the Romans, and many romantic legends have been associated with it. Early records identify the castle as 'Bebbanburgh', the seat of the kings of Bernicia, besieged twice by the Mercian King Penda. Even 1500 years ago the castle remained impregnable against attack, and had it not been for the capture of the Earl of Northumberland outside of the castle, William the Conqueror may never have taken Bamburgh in 1095.

Few traces of its Norman origins are obvious today as it has been considerably altered over many centuries. Only the great tower or keep bears all the traditional features of Norman architecture externally, although the precise date of construction is uncertain. Some fragmented remains of early stone work in the curtain walls also date from this period, but the majority is a modern restoration. Throughout its turbulent past Bamburgh Castle has received many

royal visitors, and remained Crown property until 1610 because of its important strategic position. During the Wars of the Roses it changed hands several times and the last assault in 1464 reduced the castle to a ruinous state. Subsequently abandoned, Bamburgh was left to deteriorate through natural decay and neglect.

By the eighteenth century only the huge, square keep of the Norman fortress was visible among the rubbled remains. The estate was eventually rescued and bequeathed for 'charitable purposes'. For the first time in almost 300 years Bamburgh Castle underwent a massive restoration programme, and the keep was modified to provide a school and almshouses. Work continued through the Victorian era, but financial problems inevitably led to the sale of the castle once again. In 1894 Lord Armstrong, the renowned arms manufacturer who lived close-by at Cragside, purchased the castle and immediately began extensive reconstruction work. Although it remains inhabited in part by Armstrong's descendants, and numerous tenants living in the private flats, several rooms are accessible to the public that display the magnificence work undertaken in the early part of the twentieth century.

The King's Hall is a remarkable piece of Victorian restoration that is typically medieval in character, and really sets the scene for other areas of the castle. In the Keep, the distinctive round-headed Norman arches are still a prominent feature, as is the fabulous vaulting in the main hall. Studying the thickness of the walls here, in some places a staggering 12ft (3.6m) across, it is hardly surprising that when all else was falling into a ruinous state, this immensely strong keep managed to survive. All rooms inside Bamburgh Castle portray a wealth of exhibits, artefacts and architecture to compliment the imposing grandeur of the castle's external façade.

As one of the most powerful castles of the North, Bamburgh played an important role in warding off numerious Scottish invasions. Looking at it from today's perspective it appears a somewhat daunting sight, but 800 years ago it must have been a harsh and menacing environment to stumble across. Our very first view of this former northern base of the Royals, was from Lindisfarne Priory when Bamburgh, with nothing else visible around it, appeared to have just sprung out of the depths of the North Sea and stood defiantly commanding its watery domain.

Open:

Mid March - October
Daily

OS Grid Ref: NU 184351

Bamburgh
Northumberland NE69 7DF

Tel : +44 (0) 1668 214515

Owned by The Armstrong Family

Web site : www.bamburghcastle.com

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Beeston Castle

Rising some 500ft (150m) above the Cheshire Plain is Beeston crag, a rocky outcrop forming part of a chain of hills. With a commanding view of the Welsh mountains and the Pennines, the thirteenth century ruins of Beeston Castle dominate the crag. Over 2000 years ago it is known that this site was occupied by a Bronze Age community, and later during the Iron Age a hill fort was established to protect the settlers who farmed the area. But from that time until the early 1200s it is uncertain whether the site remained in use.

In 1225 it was Ranulf, the 6th Earl of Chester, who incorporated the latest ideas in building to create an impregnable fortress - the 'Castle of the Rock'. Not only was the steep hill a natural defence, but Beeston Castle was protected by both a strong outer gatehouse at the foot of the hill, and a massive inner gatehouse at the castle entrance. Deep cut ditches, sturdy towers, and a fighting platform at roof level provided some powerful devices to prevent an attack. But neither Ranulf, nor his successor, saw the castle completed, as by 1238 Henry III had taken the earldom, and the castle. Using

Beeston merely as an assembly point for troops and supplies, the King had no need of permanent domestic arrangements, and no accommodation blocks, halls or kitchens were ever added to the castle

In 1245 Prince Edward inherited Beeston Castle as the Earl of Chester, but following his accession and his successful Welsh campaigns, the King had little use for his Cheshire castles. Although Beeston was well maintained throughout the fourteenth century, it had fallen into disrepair by the time Henry VIII came to the throne, and it was eventually sold off to a local landowner. With the outbreak of the Civil War, it was quickly repaired and garrisoned, and troops remained there until their surrender in 1645. Following the Civil War, most of the defences were demolished, and the hill was used as grazing land. From the early 1700's stone and sand were quarried, the old outer gatehouse being virtually destroyed to provide better access to the quarries. By the mid-nineteenth century the ruins of Beeston Castle were seen as a romantic image of the past that should be preserved, and the 1st Lord Tollemache put this in hand. As the new owner, he built a gatehouse at the entrance in 1846, and opened the site to visitors.

Open:

All year, daily
except 24-26 December
& 1 January

OS Grid Ref: SJ 537593

Beeston
Tarporley
Cheshire CW6 9TX

Tel : +44 (0) 1829 260464

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Web site : www.english-heritage.org.uk

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Caernarfon Castle

Of the four castles in North Wales built by order of Edward I, Caernarfon is the most magnificent. The grandeur Caernarfon displays symbolises King Edward I's intent that it would serve as the powerful seat of English government in Wales. Building work commenced in 1283 and continued for some fifty years, although the castle was never completed to realise the full extent of Edward's plans.

Caernarfon Castle was constructed in the form of two baileys, joined to create an irregular figure-of-eight, and incorporating part of a large defence wall that enclosed the town of Caernarfon. Adjoining the nine sections of curtain wall around the castle are a series of individual polygonal towers, which distinguish this castle from Edward's other Welsh castles. In the eastern bailey, or Upper Ward, the Black Tower comprises two levels of small ten-sided rooms, and the unfinished Queen's Gate displays its raised gate-passage. Both the North-East Tower and the Granary Tower are octagonal in shape, and have battlemented turrets, but one is only two-storeys high, whilst the other rises through four storeys. In the

Lower Ward, the four-storey Well Tower contains the 50ft (15m) deep well in a basement chamber, and the Queen's Tower (known in the fourteenth century as the Banner Tower), now houses the regimental museum of the Royal Welch Fusiliers. Undoubtedly the grandest tower of all was the Eagle Tower, located at the western edge of the castle. This superb four-storey ten-sided tower crowned by a trio of tall turrets would have provided splendid apartments on all three floors above its basement level. Where the baileys cross over, there is the King's Gate to the north, providing an entrance to the castle from the town, and the Chamberlain Tower to the south. The ground floor apartment of this tower was used as Prince Charles' Robing Room on the occasion of his Investiture as the Prince of Wales in 1969. All the towers are connected by an internal arrangement of wall passages.

In 1294 the people of Wales revolted against English administration of the town. The town walls were breached, and the ditch afforded the castle little protection, resulting in widespread destruction of the newly-built castle. Edward immediately rebuilt the town walls, and commenced with plans to strengthen the castle's defences. The north curtain wall was constructed, then a series of secondary barriers were installed, including a drawbridge, five doorways and six portcullises, to further protect the access to the Lower Ward. A statue of King Edward II, the first English Prince of Wales, was erected in 1321 commemorating his building work, and can be seen above the entrance to the King's Gate.

At the same time as the new defence work was under way, the timber-framed Hall of Llywelyn was shipped from Conwy to Caernarfon, and re-erected within Caernarfon Castle. This extensive building programme moreorless came to an end by 1330. Forming the administrative capital of North Wales, the town and castle were maintained and garrisoned until the beginning of the sixteenth century. Although the castle's importance lessened from

hereon, and through neglect it began to deteriorate, it was garrisoned again during the Civil War. Escaping a seventeenth century demolition order, Caernarfon was 're-born' in the mid-nineteenth century, when the castle received a massive restoration.

This vast, old fortress has withstood the test of time remarkably intact, with a little help, despite many of the courtyard buildings being reduced to nothing but foundations. Caernarfon remains an awesome and powerful sight, overshadowing the town and dominating the banks of the River Seiont. It is also a magical place of exploration, with a labyrinth of covered passageways and exciting wall walks.

Open:

All year, daily
except 24-26 December
& 1 January

OS Grid Ref: SH 477626

Castle Ditch
Caernarfon
Gwynedd, North Wales LL55 2AY

Tel : +44 (0) 1286 677617

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Web site : www.cadw.wales.gov.uk

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Caerphilly Castle

The impressive size of this well-preserved castle, the largest in Wales, is stunning on first sight. It was the first concentric castle to have been built from scratch in Britain and this design, supported by the complex arrangement of water defences, rendered the castle virtually impregnable. Even some 800 years later, Caerphilly appears as majestic as when it was initially conceived by Gilbert de Clare, the Earl of Gloucester.

Not conforming to the traditional idea of building a castle on an elevated piece of land, de Clare positioned Caerphilly low in the valley and used the idea of flooding the surrounding land as a means of defence. Dating from the thirteenth century, the castle is basically rectangular, and comprises a series of intimidating defences radiating outwards from the inner ward. There are moats, drawbridges, gatehouses, towers, and curtain walls to overcome before gaining entry to the fortified living accommodation at the heart of the castle.

Entry to the castle is through the main outer gatehouse, an imposing structure that has survived intact, almost certainly due to its long use as a prison for the district. Having negotiated this gatehouse, the Inner Ward is accessed through the East Gatehouse. Dominating the castle, this massive gatehouse is of a similar construction to that seen at Tonbridge Castle in Kent, built by Gilbert de Clare's father. Used as residential quarters by the constable, as well as providing independent defence, the gatehouse set a pattern used by King Edward I in the building of Harlech and Beaumaris Castles. Within the Inner Ward one of the glories of Caerphilly is the early fourteenth century Great Hall. Restored, and re-roofed during the 1870s, this is essentially the magnificent hall of Hugh Despenser's time. Many of the buildings have survived remarkably well in this part of the castle, with the exception of the North East Tower which is now completely ruinous. The South East Tower, although still standing, has split vertically at an angle resulting in its dramatic lean.

This innovative castle was all but complete just ten years after building work commenced, and is one of the finest examples of advanced military architecture of its time. Each of the towers and gatehouses were constructed as independent forts, and could be closed off should other areas of the castle fall under attack. Caerphilly Castle was besieged on several occasions, the most famous of which was in 1326. At this time Queen Isabella, and her lover, Roger Mortimer, attacked the castle knowing that it had sheltered her estranged husband, Edward II.

Despite being abandoned by the mid-fourteenth century, records show that the castle continued to be regularly maintained for at least the next 150 years. Subsequently, it was leased, the tenant being allowed to quarry stone from the castle to extend his own house close by. Inevitably, Caerphilly Castle soon decayed into a mere shadow of its one-time formidable appearance. The Civil War may have been responsible for further destruction, or some

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subsidence may have occurred when the lakes dried out. Whatever the reason, the castle was in a very poor state by the time it came to the Bute Family.

Restoration work at Caerphilly was started by the 3rd Marquess, and continued until 1939 under the 4th Marquess. The castle was taken over by the State in 1950 and the programme of work continued to bring the castle into the state of preservation as seen today. A feeling of immense power and strength still oozes from every part of its structure, ensuring that Caerphilly Castle remains the proud guardian of a town that has grown up around it. Many Welsh castles have been referred to as 'real' castles, and this breathtaking example is certainly worthy of being included.

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& 1 January

OS Grid Ref: ST 155870

Caerphilly
Mid-Glamorgan,
South Wales CF8 1JL

Tel : +44 (0) 2920 883143

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Web site : www.cadw.wales.gov.uk

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Carisbrooke Castle

At one time the capital of the Isle of Wight, Carisbrooke - no larger than a village itself - embraces a fine medieval castle. This Norman structure, set high on a hill, was based on a Saxon fort that occupied the site during the eighth century.

The original 'motte and bailey' castle was laid out in the eleventh century, and the polygonal Keep was added in the first half of the twelfth century, built on an artificial mound. At about the same time the stone curtain walls were built, with their square flanking towers at the south-east and south-west encompassing the bailey. On the western side of the curtain wall lies the twin-towered Gatehouse, where it is still possible to see evidence of the portcullises. This imposing Gatehouse, dating from the fourteenth/fifteenth centuries, replaced an earlier gateway built during the time of the Redvers family, who ruled the island until 1293. Following the family's departure from Carisbrooke, the castle was bought by Edward I.

Two medieval wells still exist within the castle, one in the Keep and the other in the courtyard. The Keep, reached by 71 steps, contains the original well, sunk to some 160ft (49m) deep, but after a disastrous water failure in the mid-twelfth century, a second well was dug in the courtyard. It is this well that provided the castle's water until the early twentieth century. A large treadwheel, probably worked by prisoners at one time, was used to draw the water from the well. The first wheel has long since disappeared, but the present one was installed in the late sixteenth century, at the same time that the new wellhouse was constructed. By the eighteenth century a donkey was brought in to drive the winding gear by treading the wheel. Today there are a small team of donkeys who have been trained to do this work, and they still give demonstrations of how this fascinating piece of early engineering drew up the water.

Many of the domestic buildings at Carisbrooke date from the thirteenth century, including The Great Hall which displays an impressive fireplace provided by William de Montacute. Although alterations were made by each generation, it is remarkably easy to identify the different phases of remodelling and reconstruction.

During the reign of Queen Elizabeth I, a large-scale modernisation and refortification programme was undertaken by Sir George Carey, the Queen's cousin and Governor of the castle. With the continued threat of invasion from Spain, Carey insisted that Carisbrooke's defences were strengthened and extended, but he also built himself a mansion along the western edge of the courtyard, only the foundations of which survive.

One of the sheer delights of the castle is the much restored thirteenth century chapel, commissioned by Countess Isabella. Despite it's near demolition, the beauty and opulence of this wonderful chapel as seen today is based on the original design of the Countess. During the twentieth century, the chapel was finally

restored as a memorial to King Charles I, who was imprisoned at Carisbrooke for over a year. Later still, it was decided that the chapel should become a memorial for all the people of the Island who died during the First and Second World Wars.

Carisbrooke Castle comprises a compact and unusual arrangement of buildings spanning some 1200 years. From fragments of the Saxon wall, running below the Norman Keep, to the Elizabethan and Jacobean influences enhancing the original thirteenth century construction, there is much of interest to see, and a fascinating past to uncover.

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OS Grid Ref: SZ 486877

Carisbrooke Newport Isle of Wight PO30 1XY

Tel : +44 (0) 1983 522107

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Web site : www.english-heritage.org.uk

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Carlisle Castle

Situated less than ten miles from the Scottish border, it is hardly surprising that Carlisle Castle was subjected to a history of feuding and attack for the major part of seven centuries. Overlooking the River Eden in Cumbria, the first wooden castle was built by William Rufus in 1092, after gaining control of the city previously dominated by the Scots.

The oldest and most impressive surviving building is the large twelfth century Keep, situated at the north east corner of the Inner Bailey. This was the first stone building on the site, and probably served as the Royal Palace of David I, after the castle was surrendered by the English in 1136. Restored to Henry II again in 1157, Carlise Castle has remained 'English' moreorless since this time, with the exception of a temporary Scottish repossession during the Civil War, and another brief period at the Jacobite Rising.

Originally comprising four storeys, with one large room on each level, the Keep was intended to provide the main domestic

accommodation, but new apartments were built within the inner bailey during the fourteenth century leaving this squat tower without a function. It was extensively remodelled late in the Middle Ages and was used variously as a storage room, a prison, and barracks. In the main room on the first floor, remnants of a large fourteenth century fireplace can be seen, probably added when it housed the garrison. On the next floor level, a more chilling legend is revealed in the 'licking stones'. Apparently a room here was utilised as the dungeon during the Jacobite Rising and, suffering from a lack of water, the prisoners used to lick the stones in an effort to obtain sufficient moisture to stay alive! Some elaborate carvings made by fifteenth century prisoners are still visible in a small cell.

Other buildings within the Inner Bailey include the Captain's Tower (or inner Gatehouse), a typical twelfth century structure with heavy wooden doors, a portcullis and the gruesome 'murder holes'. There are the fragmented remains of the Royal apartments, the chapel and the Great Hall, now overshadowed by the Museum of the King's Own Border Regiment and, perhaps most famously, the ruins of Queen Mary's Tower in the far north east corner. The tower is among the oldest buildings of the castle, and was named after Mary Queen of Scots, who was imprisoned at Carlisle. Lady's Walk was similarly named, as this was the area where Mary used to walk in the sunshine during her captivity at the castle.

With such a troubled and chequered history, it is not difficult to understand why the castle has undergone several rebuilding programmes over the centuries. In 1541 Henry VIII transformed the medieval castle into a powerful gun fort. Later, Carlisle Castle's fortifications were extended with new batteries and additional guns - the Civil War had commenced. Unbelievably, damage sustained to the city walls and castle at this time were repaired with stone ripped from the nave of Carlisle Cathedral. The final action seen by the castle was in 1746 when the Jacobites were fighting to put their

'Bonnie Prince Charlie' on the English throne. For half a century Carlisle Castle lay resting in the peace of civilian custody, but the nineteenth century marked out its new life as a military base. Now modern garrison blocks and regimental paraphernalia surround the 'old castle'. Nonetheless, it is remains an imposing structure, and the gatehouse appears as daunting now as it may have done at the end of the fourteenth century, when it was the main administrative centre for the county.

Colchester Castle

Constructed over the massive vaults of the ruined Temple of Claudius, Colchester Castle represents the largest Norman Keep in Europe. Measuring some 152 x 112 (46 x 34m) and built largely from stone and brick quarried from the old Roman town of Camulodunum, the castle is believed to be the work of Gundulph, Bishop of Rochester. Gundulph was responsible for the design of the White Tower (the central Keep of the Tower of London) which is the only building in Britain with the same ground plan.

Work on the castle is thought to have been started c1076 and completed some 50 years later. The basic structure consists of a rectangular block with projecting towers at each corner, and a semi-circular apse on the south end of the east elevation. A prominent feature is the outline of battlements at first floor level, which appear to have been added rather hastily during construction when threatened by an attack from the Danes.

Unusually, this castle does not seem to have experienced much action throughout history, with the exception of a brief period

during the reign of King John. By the fourteenth century the castle was obsolete as a military stronghold, and the Keep was being used mainly as a prison. In 1637 the roof of the Great Hall had collapsed. During the Civil War, Sir Charles Lucas and Sir George Lisle were held at Colchester Castle, and subsequently executed in the grounds behind the castle in 1648. The castle could have been lost altogether by the end of the seventeenth century, when it was sold to a local businessman for demolition. Following removal of the upper storeys of the great tower in 1683, the project proved unprofitable and John Wheeler ended his destruction of the castle.

In 1727 the castle was purchased as a wedding gift for Charles Gray, a local man who later became an MP for Colchester. Whilst living in the nearby Georgian mansion, he set about restoring the south front of Colchester Castle to a habitable state, adding the tiled roof and dome. The crypt was opened to the public in 1860 as a museum. Further restoration took place in the 1930s when the local council acquired the building and grounds, and again in 1983 with an extensive programme to stabilise the old Keep. Work was finally completed in 1992, and is now home to the Colchester and Essex Museum.

Open: **OS Grid Ref: TL 999253**

All year, daily   **Castle Park**
                                   Colchester CO1 1TJ

                                   Tel : +44 (0) 1206 282939

Managed by Colchester Council

Web site : www.colchestermuseums.org.uk

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Conwy Castle

This impressive and magnificent fortress was completed in just five years during the latter part of thirteenth century. One of Edward I's great Welsh castles, it was built at the same time as the town walls, thereby providing an entire defence system of Conwy, and represents an outstanding example of military medieval architecture. When first constructed, this relatively simple, yet imposing castle cost in the region of £20,000 to build, being the most costly of all Welsh castles.

The irregular shape of Conwy Castle follows the natural lines of the rock base upon which it is built. With eight mighty round towers set into the 30ft (9m) high curtain wall, it is neither concentric in plan nor has a gatehouse or keep. Each tower has a diameter of over 30ft (9m), walls some 15ft (4.6m) thick, and a height soaring to some 70ft (21m). Along the north curtain wall, the towers are spaced equidistantly to create three similar sections of wall. At the eastern end of the site, a roughly square inner bailey has been formed with an arrangement of turretted towers, one at each corner, and this was fronted by a Barbican with three open turrets.

Located within the Barbican, adjacent to the Chapel Tower, a steep stairway led to the Watergate, which no longer exists. The towers adjoining the Barbican could be accessed via flights of stairs leading up through the thickness of the east curtain wall. The inner ward contained a range of royal apartments, and a grand hall, with the royal bedchambers situated on the upper storeys of the King's Tower.

Only one of the eight towers has suffered damage, through partial collapse, and that is the Bakehouse Tower. Other towers are the Kitchen Tower, the Prison Tower (housing the castle dungeon), and the North-West and South-West Towers, accessible via the reconstructed newel staircases. Adjacent to the Prison Tower, stands the remarkably well-preserved Great Hall, containing three fireplaces, one of which dates from the mid-thirteenth century and is elaborately moulded. Originally roofed in timber, this was replaced with a stone-arched roof in the fourteenth century, but only one of the eight stone arches has survived. All other internal buildings of Conwy Castle are now ruinous.

Conwy was the operational base of Edward I during the Autumn of 1294 when Madog led a rebellion against English rule in North Wales. By the end of the year, the King was effectively beseiged in Conwy, due to rising water and a lack of food supplies, yet the castle did not come under attack. By the mid-fourteenth century Conway Castle had deteriorated through long periods of neglect. Some 250 years later the building was considered too dangerous to enter, and the Civil War effectively sealed its fate. In 1655 the order was issued for Conwy to be slighted. Ten years later Lord Conwy arranged for the castle to be stripped of any remaining valuable materials, and it was subsequently left to withstand the ravages of nature for the next two hundred years.

During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries Conway Castle was the subject of extensive restoration work, and a regular

programme of conservation work began in earnest when the State became responsible for this historic monument in the 1950s. The significance of Conwy in medieval times is still apparent today, not only in the shape of a splendid castle, but also by the extensive system of walls encompassing the town. A total of some 1400 yards (1200m) of walling stretch around the town, with 21 of the original 22 towers in place and three of the town gates surviving. From wherever the castle is viewed, it cannot fail to present an awesome image of power and stability as it continues to dominate the town of Conwy.

Open:

All year, daily
except 24-26 December
& 1 January

OS Grid Ref: SH 783774

Conwy
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Web site : www.cadw.wales.gov.uk

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Corfe Castle

Situated on top of an isolated hill, this roughly triangular site of fragmented buildings and walls marks the location of a once magnificent castle. The naturally steep site, set in a central gap among the Purbeck Hills, provided the perfect environment for King John's favourite castle.

The first castle structure at Corfe began soon after the Norman Conquest, although the Saxon kings probably had a palace on or near this site, famously associated with the murder of the young King Edward in 978. Towards the end of the eleventh century the castle began to be built in stone, with a small hall and a curtain wall enclosing what was later to become the inner bailey. Evidence of this early work can be found near the summit of the hill. During the reign of Henry I a three-storey rectangular great tower was constructed adjacent to the southern wall of the inner bailey, and this was later given a forebuilding.

It was substantially extended when King John came to the throne and, among other things, he was responsible for the comfortable

accommodation block known as the 'gloriette'. These were the finest apartments in any English castle at the beginning of the thirteenth century, but little remains today. King John spent much time at Corfe Castle and also added the curtain wall around the west bailey, and its octagonal tower, the ditch separating the south-east outer bailey from the rest of the castle, and part of the curtain wall and flanking towers of the outer bailey.

Completion of the curtain wall and the addition of the south-east gatehouse, and the inner gatehouse were down to King Henry III, who used Corfe as an arsenal as well as a fortified residence. The only other significant work undertaken at the castle was during Edward I's reign when an extra level was added to the great tower. Until Queen Elizabeth I's time, Corfe Castle remained in Crown possession but was visited less frequently by royalty. Maintenance became expensive and Elizabeth decided to sell it in 1572.

The Civil War moreorless sealed its fate. Successfully holding out against a Parliamentary seige, Corfe Castle became a royalist island for nearly three years. As a consequence, when it was finally captured in 1646 Parliament ordered it to be thoroughly destroyed, but this proved to be extremely difficult. Blowing it up caused the walls and towers to bow out, and some sections to slide downhill, but much of the structure remained standing. The thirteenth century octagonal Butavant Tower at the western tip of the bailey suffered most severely but, in contrast, the North Tower has retained many of its architectural features. Situated on the east curtain wall near to the castle ditch, the Plukenet Tower still bears the shield-of-arms of Alan de Plukenet on the exterior stonework. He was the constable of Corfe Castle for five years whilst Henry III was King. Located in the south-east corner of the outer bailey, the late thirteenth century Horseshoe Tower survives almost to its original height, but only the lower parts of the Outer Gatehouse towers from the same period now exist.

Corfe's ruinous condition makes it difficult to imagine just how palatial it must have been when King John lived there some 700 years ago, but some of the surviving detail does give a clue to its former splendour. Standing as a dramatic legacy to the strength of medieval castle-building, Corfe today makes an evocative picture set against the backdrop of the gentle Dorset countryside.

Open:

All year, daily
except 25-26 December
& 1 day in mid-March

OS Grid Ref: SY 959824

The Square
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Dartmouth Castle

Jutting out at the entrance to the Dart estuary, this well-positioned castle was one of the earliest in England specifically designed to carry guns. Construction began in the late fifteenth century when the local merchants felt vulnerable to possible invasion, and wanted to provide some protection for their warehouses and cargoes. There is evidence that an earlier fortification was sited here towards the end of the fourteenth century, when there was threat of a French invasion, but this soon fell into disuse.

Basically, Dartmouth Castle consists of a round tower, built mainly of limestone rubble, and a square tower constructed of slate. Both towers are battlemented. The round tower was the first to be built but, prior to its completion, work commenced on the

square tower. This may go some way to providing an explanation as to why slate was used for the upper parts of the round tower when the two were joined together. Crenellated gun platforms stretch out from either side of the towers.

The rather cramped basement areas of each tower adequately illustrate Dartmouth Castle's dedication to the use of defence weapons. In the square tower there are seven gunports in the sea-facing walls, and the round tower houses three lower gunports and four slits for muskets. The main entrance to the castle was through a ground level doorway in the square tower, and several small openings for handguns can be seen in the first chamber. At ground level in the round tower, a timber-framed opening is located in the wall towards the river which probably accommodated a boom chain.

Originally separated into three rooms, the first floor of the castle served as the main residential quarters. The round tower contained one room, whilst the square tower held two barrack rooms which were divided by a passage leading to the roof. Many openings remaining in the walls were windows, although some were likely to have been used for musketry. Further defence mechanisms were located on the roof of the castle, including pivots for light guns, and the turret provided a good vantage point for sighting a possible invasion from either sea or land. Directly in line with Dartmouth Castle but on the opposite bank of the estuary, Kingswear Castle was built to provide additional defences. If the area came under threat, the boom chain from Dartmouth Castle was carried across the channel and secured at Kingswear, in an attempt to impede shipping.

Despite being caught up in the Civil War, and eventually stormed by Sir Thomas Fairfax in 1646, Dartmouth saw little action in its originally intended role. Some major additions and modifications were made to the castle during the sixteenth and

seventeenth centuries, but it has survived in a quite remarkable state of preservation.

Today the castle seems almost overshadowed by St Petrox Church, the spreading greenery, and the general hubbub along this busy stretch of the river. Even with a good imagination, it is difficult to visualise this moderate structure as an imposing military fort. But from its towers, it does command some spectacular views of the surrounding area. Similarly, the best way to view the full extent of Dartmouth Castle is to approach it using the ferry service that leaves regularly from the quay.

Deal Castle

Commissioned by Henry VIII in response to threatened invasions during the sixteenth century, Deal was one of the last castles in England to be purpose-built as a military fort. As this area was considered to be particularly vulnerable, the King ordered a line of castles to be constructed along a two-mile coastal stretch of The Downs. The castles at Walmer and Sandown, together with Deal, were originally linked by an earthen rampart and would have provided a formidable defence along the Kentish shores. Nothing survives of the earth works, nor indeed of Sandown Castle.

Based on a 'walls within walls' plan, Deal Castle was the largest of all Henry's forts. Shaped liked a Tudor rose, it is perfectly symmetrical with a low, circular Keep located at its centre. Around the circumference of the Keep stand six semi-circular bastions, rising to the height of the first floor, and a further series of six huge 'half-moon' projections form a massive curtain wall. The idea of employing rounded surfaces to all outer walls of the castle produced a two-fold effect. Firstly, this design greatly improved the strength of a building but, most importantly, they were able to deflect shot

more efficiently. A further advantage of the overall circular layout of Deal Castle was that it allowed particularly good artillery coverage, with over 200 cannon and gun ports set within the five tiers. Surrounded entirely by a very deep wide moat, it has to have been one of the most strongly defended castles ever.

Entry to the castle was formerly by way of a drawbridge across the moat, leading directly into the most westerly of the huge outer bastions. Doubling as a gatehouse, this bastion retains the sixteenth century iron-studded oak door to the entrance passage. As Deal Castle was built specifically as a fortress, there are none of the usual residential apartments in the Keep. Basic accommodation was provided on the ground floor for the soldiers, with slightly better living quarters on the first floor for the captain. The basement was used for the storage of provisions, and ammunition, and possibly prisoners. A well-head was situated in the central vaulted chamber of the basement, ensuring the Keep was entirely self-sufficient, and the well remains exposed. Despite numerous alterations carried out during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, some of the bastions have been left untouched.

Deal is yet another example of a fort that was never really tested in its intended role. Before the onset of the Civil War, the castle had already begun to show signs of serious decay, and some repairs were probably carried out during the 1630s. All three of Henry's coastal forts were beseiged in the Civil War, and subsequently some further repairs were undertaken, but Deal never again engaged in military action. The Governor's lodgings were re-built at the beginning of the nineteenth century, only to be destroyed by German bombs in 1941 when the Kent coastline came under attack during the Second World War.

The fascinating design of Deal Castle was considered radical back in the 1540s, and unlike the traditional military architecture of the time. This makes an exploration of Deal more

than just an appreciation of its physical features. It will stimulate the mind to question where Henry VIII got the idea for this design, and why he decided to employ this 'untried' style in a potentially vulnerable location. Whatever changes may have been made at Deal, there is still an overwhelming sense of power and foreboding lurking among the grey, stark walls of this vast fortification, both above and below ground.

Dover Castle

Guardian of the Gateway to England, this giant of a castle displays a solid strength and determination that has obviously carried it through many troubled times. Proudly standing atop the White Cliffs, overlooking this busy port, Dover has withstood the test of time remarkably well throughout it's long and eventful history. Dover Castle as seen today dates from the rebuilding work began during Henry II's reign, but the site has been of prime strategic importance since the Iron Age. High above the ramparts to the north-east of the castle sit the remains of a first century Roman lighthouse (pharos), and a beautiful Anglo-Saxon church.

The first castle was probably an Anglo-Saxon fortress, subsequently improved with the arrival of William the Conqueror. His castle was later developed in stone, but the Norman motte (mound) which supported the early castle is today known as 'Castle Hill'. Work began on the present castle in the latter part of the twelfth century with the construction of the Keep (or Great Tower) - the largest in Britain - and is entered through a forebuilding more substantial than any other built before, or since.

At each corner of the Keep lies a buttress turret, and mid-way along each wall is a pilaster buttress. Four storeys high, the Keep comprises a basement, first floor, and a second floor spanning two storeys, the upper level of which is a mural gallery. The royal apartments were housed on the second floor, with additional accommodation on the first floor, similar in layout but much less elaborate than those above. All floors were connected by staircases set in the north and south corner turrets.

Providing the entry staircase, and two chapels, is the magnificent forebuilding. It is interesting to note the décor of the chapels - the lower chapel of a Gothic style, and the upper chapel late Norman and richly decorated. Standing outside the Keep, the significance of the three-towered forebuilding can be fully appreciated, as it stretches along the eastern wall of the Keep and turns the corner of the southern wall. It was around this stronghold that the concentric castle was developed, work being completed in the mid-thirteenth century. Henry III was responsible for not only finishing his father's work, but renovating, rebuilding and reinforcing the splendid castle. He completed the group of towers now known as the Norfolk Towers, extended the outer curtain wall, containing twenty individual towers, and constructed the resplendent Constable's Gate. By this time Dover Castle had reached its full potential as an impregnable fortress and a palatial residence.

Built to replace the former entrance, the Constable's Gate comprises a cluster of round towers, varying in size, with spur bases dropping deep into the ditch ensuring that angles of attack were covered. Cylindrical towers join over the entrance passage to the front, and at the rear the Constable's living quarters, are located. Although the entrance passage has survived from the medieval period, the residential quarters have been subsequently modernised.

During the Civil War, Dover Castle was attacked and kept under Cromwell's forces for a number of years, but remarkably without the usual widespread despoliation and destruction that was commonplace throughout this period. It has played an important military role throughout history, and evidence from several periods of war are scattered across the vast site. Hidden deep inside the famous White Cliffs, beneath castle itself, are a vast network of underground tunnels, originally constructed in the Middle Ages. These tunnels were greatly extended during the Napoleonic wars to provide additional barracks for the vast number of soldiers called to Dover as the threat of a French invasion grew. This massive underground complex also played a vital role in the Second World War.

Open:

All year, daily
except 24-26 December
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OS Grid Ref: TR 326416

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Launceston Castle

The ruins of Launceston Castle still dominate the old market town, and act as a constant reminder of the former authority that the Earls of Cornwall wielded over the local inhabitants. As the administrative centre for Cornwall until 1840, Launceston had many county responsibilities, and the castle played an important role in maintaining these.

In the latter part of the eleventh century, it was William's half-brother who was granted the Earldom of Cornwall, and built the first castle. Typically for that time, it was probably constructed of timber, and surrounded by a good defensive system of ditches, but very few factual details are known about the early castle. During the thirteenth century, when Richard of Cornwall held the earldom

through five decades, Launceston Castle was completely remodelled. As one of the wealthiest and most powerful men of that time, his castle was designed to duly reflect that status.

The imposing, solid drum towers either side of the South Gatehouse, and the re-siting of the North Gate (or Town Gate) were part of Richard's work, along with the circular, high tower inserted in the shell Keep. In fact, it would appear that he became over zealous with improving the defences at the castle, yet there would have been little military threat at that time. Further changes were made within the castle bailey, including the complete levelling of the tightly-packed buildings occupying this space. It appears that the Great Hall, with an adjoining kitchen, and a small chapel replaced these buildings, giving the castle a more spacious feel.

Following Richard's death the castle's fortunes suffered and, consequently, it became neglected for several years. In 1341 Edward (the Black Prince) instigated the essential repairs at Launceston, and various subsequent renovation works continued well into the fifteenth century. The Great Hall remained in use until the early 1600`s as the County Assizes, and the North Gatehouse became an infamous prison. Only a few decades later, when the Parliamentary Survey of 1650 was conducted, not only had the Hall virtually disappeared,but all other buildings within the bailey. The only evidence of this large stone hall are a few low rubbled fragments marking the actual site of the building within the bailey.

As Launceston Castle approached the nineteenth century many more changes took place. Inhabited now by only a governor and a small number of both male and female prisoners, most of the remaining buildings and the curtain wall were demolished. After the Assizes were moved to Bodmin in 1840, the last prison buildings were demolished and the castle became defunct. The grounds were eventually landscaped and turned into a public park by the Duke of Northumberland. With the majority of the castle having lain buried

for almost a century, it suffered one final insult in 1944 when the bailey was littered with wartime huts to provide a military hospital for the American army.

Having been subjected to such a turbulent past, and been virtually destroyed on numerous occasions, it is with some relief that the history of Launceston Castle is gradually being revealed by continuing excavations. If the ruins seem a little puzzling and disjointed, simply enjoy the site for its tranquility and its vistas from the top of the mound.

Open:

April - October, daily
November - March, only
Friday to Sunday
except 24-26 December
& 1 January

OS Grid Ref: SX 330846

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Lincoln Castle

Long ago recognised as an important centre, Lincoln was one of the four provincial capitals of Roman Britain. Nearly 2,000 years ago a Roman fort would have occupied the same hilltop position enjoyed by William the Conqueror's royal castle. Following the Norman invasion of England, he built a far-reaching network of royal castles, but Lincoln was one of the first. This early castle was probably no more than a wooden stockade and a mound (or motte), but by 1115 the walls were being replaced with stone. Sections of Norman herringbone masonry from this time are still visible within the high curtain walls that have remained remarkably intact.

There are two mottes at Lincoln Castle, both on the southern edge of the bailey, the larger one accommodating a twelfth century shell keep (Lucy Tower), and the other housing the Observatory Tower. This square structure topped with a round turret has three distinct building periods. It started as a rectangular Norman tower, extended during the fourteenth century to square it off, and during the early part of the nineteenth century it was

capped with a Victorian turret. Defensively, Lincoln Castle had two main gatehouses, and a squat tower (Cobb Hall) set within the north-east corner of the curtain. The West Gate was the most important entrance, and this has recently been restored since it was blocked up in the fifteenth century. Today, visitors access the castle through the impressive East Gate, which was given a new façade during the fourteenth century with two great drum towers but only the foundations of this work remain visible. None of the medieval domestic buildings usually found within the bailey have survived, as a dedicated prison replaced these during the eighteenth century - although prisoners were being held at the castle as early as 1068. The old medieval hall of the castle became a court room early in the eighteenth century, replaced in 1776 by the first courthouse. When this subsided, the present Gothic Crown Court building was built in the 1820s. A small bath house of similar style was also constructed to the north of the court building which served as the prison laundry. A gaol, dating from 1787 and enlarged during Victorian times, dominates the southern part of the bailey.

Lincoln Castle suffered damage on various occasions, but the Civil War really ended its use as a stronghold. It continued to evolve with the needs of the city and its people, and a fascinating story is now revealed within this single enclosure.

Open:

All year, daily
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& 1 January

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Castle Hill
Lincoln LN1 3AA

Tel : +44 (0) 1522 511068

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Web site : www.lincolnshire.gov.uk

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Llawhaden Castle

In the early twelfth century, the full wealth and power of the Bishops of St Davids was clearly demonstrated by the properties they built or acquired. Three impressive, fortified palaces were erected to accommodate their grand lifestyle, but Llawhaden was the only one that truly resembled a castle. Originally little more than an earthwork enclosure surrounded by a moat, the palace was captured and destroyed by Lord Rhys in 1192. Within a couple of years Llawhaden Castle had been recovered by the Bishop, and re-building in stone began almost immediately. Following the line of the old earthworks, a curtain wall was erected to replace the wooden stockade, with semi-circular towers being placed at regular intervals along its length.

During the latter part of the thirteenth century Llawhaden was converted and extended into a prestigious palace for Bishop Thomas Bek, and his work formed the foundation for later additions. The trend for transforming these modest strongholds into lavish, fortified mansions continued into the fourteenth century, and most of today's visible remains were built for Bishop David Martyn. A massive gatehouse, constructed in the late fourteenth century, was the last major building project at Llawhaden, and this survives to its full height, though much decayed internally.

With the Dissolution of the Monasteries came the changing fortunes of the bishops. Their palaces were deserted, and Llawhaden Castle has stood in neglected silence since the sixteenth century. Despite its extensive use as a local quarry over the centuries, some walls remain to a good height and a substantial earthwork clearly delineates the original moat. Despite the fact that this strange arrangement of ruins are devoid of any detailed work, the sheer size of the site conjures up pictures of wealth and splendour almost unimaginable some seven hundred years ago.

Middleham Castle

The much rebuilt and remodelled castle seen today, was the second one to be built in the small market town of Middleham. An earlier earthwork castle, dating from the mid-eleventh century, was built by a Norman lord of Richmond on higher ground to the south-west. Less than one hundred years later, the hilltop location was abandoned in favour of the current site, and the new stone 'hall-keep' castle was built. A huge rectangular structure measuring some 108ft (32.9m) long by 78ft (23.8m) wide, this was a single storey building providing a hall and solar, with vaulted undercrofts below.

Originally, entry was gained via an eastern gatehouse across a wooden bridge, or possibly even a drawbridge over a moat

(now dry). However, the present entrance to Middleham Castle is through a three-storey, northern gatehouse with a passageway at ground level. Confronted by such an elaborate structure, with huge wooden gates and a grand portcullis, it must have given a splendid impression of wealth and power.

Despite its ruinous state, the central Keep, towering to a height of some 66ft (19.8m), is still quite imposing. It is no longer possible to clamber up the original stone staircase as this was destroyed, but the top of the Keep is accessible from the modern steps in the south-east corner. Wonderful views of the surrounding countryside can be appreciated from the battlements, and it is also a perfect vantage point from which to identify the site of the first castle at Middleham. With two wells and two circular stone pits, possibly for storing live fish, it is reasonable to assume that much of the ground floor was used as a kitchen area. Although by no means the tallest Keep in England, Middleham Castle's arrangement was extremely large in area, providing exceptional living quarters and adequate security.

When the castle was acquired by the prestigious Neville family in the late thirteenth century, they were keen to enlarge it. By the beginning of the fourteenth century, Middleham Castle had been transformed with a curtain and angle towers to encircle the Keep. During the fifteenth century the curtain was heightened to provide new lodging ranges along the south, west and north walls, but the main residential apartments were still to be found in the modernised Keep. This remained the heart of the castle, where administrative matters were dealt with, and where days of feasting and entertaining took place regularly. Even disputes were settled here when it was later utilised as the local courtroom. However, those wishing to gain access would have to pass through several defence barriers, including three heavily guarded gates, and an ante-room, before entry to the Hall was permitted.

It became a Northern power-base for the Nevilles during the Wars of the Roses and, most famously, Richard Neville (the 'Kingmaker') held Edward IV prisoner at Middleham Castle in 1469. Many other monarchs have been associated with Middleham, but perhaps none loved it more than Richard III. As a young boy he had spent a few years of 'schooling' there under the care of the Earl of Warwick. From 1471, when Richard inherited the Earl's estates, he spent as much time as possible at the castle. Having also married a Neville, it was fitting that they made Middleham their chief residence. Their only son, Edward, was borne at Middleham Castle and, sadly, died there also. Henry VII took over the castle after Richard's death, and it remained a Crown possession until 1604, although it was rarely occupied. This centre of defense, power and politics was then allowed to fall into a gradual state of decay.

Open:

April - October, daily
November - March,
Daily except Mon & Tues
Closed 24-26 December
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Orford Castle

Standing on the Suffolk coast, Orford Castle was built by King Henry II between 1165 and 1173, primarily to counteract the threat of the dominant East Anglian barons, including Hugh Bigod of Norfolk. There was also the need to protect and defend the busy port of Orford from any coastal invasions. When completed, this magnificent castle consisted of a stone curtain wall with a number of rectangular flanking towers, and a twin-towered gatehouse surrounding an unusual polygonal Keep (or great tower). A fairly substantial ditch on the outside of the curtain wall provided further protection.

Today, only the keep of the royal castle survives, the curtain wall, gatehouse and towers all having long since disappeared.

From building accounts of the time, it is understood that the keep was ready for occupation by 1167. The basic plan consists of a circular tower encompassed by three great turrets placed at equidistant intervals. Externally, the structure actually comprises 21 sides, built mainly from local septaria stone but dressed with more expensive imported stone. This impressive tower, some 90ft (27.4m) tall, has an internal arrangement consisting of a basement level, two double-storey levels each containing a large hall, and a roof with battlemented parapets between the three turrets rising above roof level.

Larger than the other two, the south-east turret accommodates the entrance to Orford Castle via the forebuilding, which was built to approximately half the height of the tower itself. Above the doorway to a small lobby, a lovely triangular Norman arch can still be seen, and beyond the lobby the rounded arches surrounding the main castle entrance. Henry made this castle very individual, both in design and layout, and it was one of his most expensive projects. The thick, stone walls of the keep indicate that it was always intended to become a fortified family residence, and the spiral stairs inside each of the towers led off to a maze of rooms and passageways. At the first level is a wedge-shaped chapel and, to the left of the doorway, a narrow gap in the edge of the floor shows this was used as a portcullis slot. Beyond is the large circular hall, probably occupied by the constable, with its own kitchen and adjoining chamber. The second floor arrangement is almost identical but as this was the royal hall, undoubtedly used by King Henry himself. Large windows provided plenty of light, and decorative corbels supported a former conical ceiling. In the basement, most likely used as a storeroom, there is a well at the centre.

As a fortress and royal stronghold, Orford led a surprisingly short and uneventful life. Immediately on completion of the castle it was garrisoned and stocked with provisions when Henry's

eldest son, supported by Bigod, threatened to attack. The rebellion collapsed, and the castle remained unscathed. It was captured by the French in 1217, and afterwards repaired, but it was never lived in again by royalty. Following years of tenants, Orford Castle was eventually granted to the Earl of Suffolk by Edward III, and so began its decline. Uninhabited and neglected for centuries, the castle was allowed to collapse, the last stretch of wall falling in 1841. This is a strangely fascinating castle, the remarkably intact keep the sole surviving structure left to stand among former defensive mounds.

Open:

April - October, daily
November - March
Daily, except Mon & Tues
Closed 24-26 December
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Orford
Suffolk IP12 2ND

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Web site : www.english-heritage.org.uk

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Pembroke Castle

The first castle was founded at Pembroke in 1093 by Roger of Montgomery, and withstood many Welsh attacks over several decades. However, in 1189 under the ownership of William Marshall, the early earth and timber castle was gradually transformed into a powerful stone fortress. Dominating the site is the enormous round Keep, one of the largest and finest examples of its kind in the country. At the base of this structure the walls are some 19ft (5.7m) thick, and it rises through five floors to a height of 75ft (22.5m) to be crowned by a unique stone dome.

Among the other substantial remains of Pembroke Castle is the impressive thirteenth century Gatehouse and Barbican Tower, two large ruined halls, and a series of restored towers set within the curtain walls. As the keep was never designed to provide comfortable domestic accommodation, the main residential part of the castle was contained in the Gatehouse. Together with the Barbican, which once had an amazing arrangement of portcullises, this part of the castle formed a vast fortified unit. Following Cromwell's success in securing Pembroke Castle in 1648, the

immense strength of the Barbican Tower was put to the ultimate test. Ordering the destruction of the castle was one thing, but actually trying to reduce it to a pile of rubble was quite another. Even cannon and gunpowder could not finish the job completely.

Of the buildings added in the late thirteenth century, the Northern (or Great) Hall remains impressive in its ruinous state. With huge decorated windows, and large fireplaces set in the walls of the old living rooms, the accommodation here must have been quite luxurious. Beneath this chamber, at the bottom of the spiral staircase, is a vast cave. Formed years ago by the fast-flowing waters of the river, this amazing cavern is a unique feature among British castles. At one time it would have been possible to access Pembroke Castle from the river via this cave, and it was once used as a boat store. Another structure remaining intact is the Henry Tower, believed to have been the Birthplace of Henry Tudor (later to become King Henry VII) in 1457. In commemoration of his Birth, a splendid fireplace decorated with Tudor heraldry was erected at Pembroke, as was customary during that period. Scenes of joy turn quickly to ones of horror when entering the Dungeon Tower. It was here that many past injustices occurred with alarming regularity, and a grim reminder of medieval cruelty exists. Located in a corner of the room is the 'oubliette' -a small hole in the ground where offenders were incarcerated and left to die.

Following Cromwell's attempts to destory Pembroke Castle, it was left to decay naturally and, as was usual, much of the stone was quarried away for use in local homes and farmsteads. It was more than 200 years before the 'romantic ruin' was a given a chance to be rehabilitated. The famous antiquarian J R Cobb, well-known for his restoration work throughout Wales, decided to buy the castle in 1880, and spent three years partially restoring Pembroke to its former glory. By 1928 it had, once again, fallen into a state of disrepair, but this time it was rescued by a General Philipps. Due to his extensive restoration programme, the castle was carefully

brought back to resemble its original appearance.

Castles are always fascinating places to explore, and Pembroke certainly rates highly among those holding great appeal for all ages. Full of history and interest, with innumerable staircases and turrets to investigate, and a few dark secrets to unveil. A walk along the ramparts, and a climb to the top of the Keep, give a clear appreciation of the magnificent defensive position Pembroke Castle commanded.

Open: **OS Grid Ref: SM 982016**

All year, daily   **Pembroke**
                                           Dyfed
                                           South Wales SA71 4LA

                                           Tel : +44 (0) 1646 684585

Managed by Pembroke Castle Trust

Web site : www.pembrokecastle.co.uk

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Pevensey Castle

The roughly oval plan of Pevensey Castle dates from Roman times, and evidence of this period can still be seen in the remains of the rectangular gatehouse, and a small postern in the north west wall. Remarkably, the walls of the castle have remained in a relatively good state of preservation, providing a good indication of the layout and structure of the castle buildings. Although some of the early earthwork defences were subsequently replaced by structural fortifications, the old Roman ditches and mounds around the site are still visible.

When William the Conqueror reached the Sussex shores in September 1066, he utilised the old Roman fort to shelter his troops whilst preparing for battle. After his victory at Hastings, he

granted Pevensey to his half-brother, Robert of Mortain who subsequently erected a castle on the site. De Mortain used the existing fort, which had laid derelict for over 600 years, as the base for building his castle, carrying out only minor repairs to the walls forming the outer bailey, and building a new inner bailey at the eastern end.

A new gateway replaced the original main entrance to the southwest, and the east gateway was repaired. Remodelling and extending the existing structures within the original fort formed the main programme of work. An irregular, rectangular-shaped enclosure was created using part of the Roman wall and two bastions on the south-eastern side. Shortly after the inner bailey was created, the rectangular stone keep was erected incorporating part of the east curtain wall and a Roman bastion. Some time later, three more bastions facing the inner bailey were added to the keep.

The gatehouse of the inner bailey was much altered throughout Pevensey Castle's history, although only parts of the towers and the passageway have survived. Along the curtain wall of the inner bailey are three round-fronted towers dating from the thirteenth century, despite alterations made by troops who garrisoned the castle at a later date. Most sections of the curtain wall have remained intact, and within them the remains of fireplaces can be seen.

This extensive site, situated on the gentle Sussex coast, is a fascinating insight into two very distinct periods of building that were brought together to create a strong, medieval fortress. Following a long and turbulent history, Pevensey was left uninhabited by the sixteenth century and fell into a ruinous state. It was reinstated for a brief period to provide an additional defence mechanism at the time of the Spanish Armada threat.

Having seen its final days of occupancy, the castle passed through a succession of owners. Finally it came into the possession of the Duke of Devonshire, and in 1925 he presented Pevensey Castle to the State for preservation.

Open:

Wed - Sun
All year
except 24-26 December
& 1 January

OS Grid Ref: TQ 645048

Pevensey
East Sussex BN24 5LE

Tel : +44 (0) 1323 762604

Managed by English Heritage

Web site : www.english-heritage.org.uk

Find exact location using Multimap

Portchester Castle

Since Roman Times there has been a castle at Portchester, which emphasises the importance of its rather scenic location, perfectly positioned for defending Portsmouth harbour and the Channel. Even today, the most complete Roman Walls in Europe from the third century fort, can still be found on this site. The curtain wall of the Outer Bailey originally had twenty bastions and four gates - two of these massive gates are known as the Watergate and the Landgate - and the south wall displays some of the best examples of Roman work.

The Norman castle, positioned in the north-west corner of the Roman Fort, occupies less than one quarter of the area within the Outer Bailey walls. Throughout medieval times, the residential apartments of the royal palace, and the Constable's residence, were contained within a range of buildings spanning three walls of the Inner Bailey. But the first building to be erected was the Keep, originally a single-storey hall providing secure residential accommodation. This was constructed across the Roman wall, and later extended to its present height. As the only building in this area

not to have been successively rebuilt, most of the Norman features have survived. From a later period, there are traces of painted decoration created by prisoners of the Napoleonic wars. Some of the paintings are thought to relate to theatrical performances given in the basement of the Keep in the early years of the nineteenth century. A series of forebuildings protected entry to the Keep, and housed the castle Chapel, but only fragments now exist. It was during the first phase of building that the Augustinian Priory was founded within the castle precincts, the twelfth century church surviving as the local parish church when the canons left in 1150. Situated in the outer bailey, this delightful little church is the sole building to survive, and now dominates the south-east corner of the original Roman fort.

During the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the domestic ranges were rebuilt several times. Controlling the drawbridge over the moat was the Gatehouse, and this was extended forward several times between the twelfth and seventeenth centuries. On the outside of the Gatehouse the partly ruined thirteenth century roundels (or semi-circular defensive walls), large enough for a man to stand on, may have been connected with a wooden bridge. Ashton`s Tower, found in the north-east corner, was named after a constable of the castle, Sir Robert of Ashton (1376-81). Not only did the tower provide an extension to the constable's living quarters, but it also strengthened the defences of the Inner Bailey. At this time there were new hand-held guns, and the keyhole-shaped gun-loops were introduced specifically for them. Around 1390, the parapet walk was constructed, also with gun-ports, and much of this can still be seen today. At each end of the parapet a projecting arch (squinch) was built to make it difficult for the walls to be climbed. An external latrine, built on one particular squinch, was also an added incentive to avoid that area of wall.

Being conveniently located near the Channel, it was a favourite among the Royals until the fifteenth century, and the elaborate

buildings reflect this fact. Henry I found its position fortuitous when travelling to France, and in 1163-4 when bullion was being shipped to Normandy, Henry II made several visits to Portchester Castle. During the fourteenth century, the castle was well maintained for fear of constant threats from France and, by the end of the century with a temporary state of peace existing, Richard II transformed the inner courtyard buildings into a Royal Palace. In the seventeenth century, Sir Thomas Cornwallis was responsible for extensive remodelling of the castle in order to provide more spacious accommodation, and in 1601 Queen Elizabeth I was entertained at Portchester.

This nine-acre site provides such a wealth of fascination, not least because it's history spans some 2000 years and there is so much evidence of all periods of occupation. Portchester Castle has developed and re-invented itself in many guises, from Roman fort to medieval stronghold, and from a royal palace to a prison.

Open:

All year, daily
except 24-26 December
& 1 January
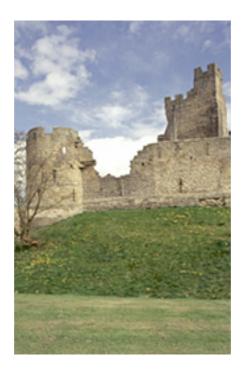
OS Grid Ref: SU 625046

Portchester
Hampshire PO16 9QW

Tel : +44 (0) 2392 378291

Managed by English Heritage

Web site : www.english-heritage.org.uk

Find exact location using Multimap

Prudhoe Castle

Most of the surviving building work dates from the twelfth century, although the site of Prudhoe Castle has strong Norman origins. As a great fortress, a baronial home, and a powerful administrative centre, Prudhoe has played many active roles throughout its history. Situated in the Tyne valley in Northumberland, it was inevitably involved in the Border wars between Scotland and England, and was subjected to siege at various times.

The plan of Prudhoe Castle is roughly in the shape of a figure of eight, the inner and outer baileys now separated by a Georgian manor house that was built on the site of earlier residential buildings. Within the inner bailey, the most substantial building is

the great tower. Originally two storeys high, the tower was extended in the fourteenth/fifteenth centuries to provide a further level with turrets. Only the south-west turret still exists, and the original height of the tower can be seen by its roof line running along the inside of the west wall. Adjacent to the great tower lie a range of thirteenth century buildings known as the 'forebuilding', but the eastern wall of this structure was later consolidated into the building of the nineteenth century manor house.Towards the west of the inner bailey are two rounded towers, also dating from the thirteenth century. The tower in the north-west corner of the bailey is virtually intact, whereas only the base remains of the south west tower.

Of several early buildings contained in the outer ward, the great hall was the most impressive and important. Little more than the foundations hugging the north curtain wall are visible today, but indications of its former grandeur have been found. East of the great hall, a series of domestic service buildings were situated, including a sixteenth century brewhouse. To the south are the fragmentary remains of a medieval building, possibly once used as lodgings. A remarkable survival is the twelfth century gatehouse, a relatively simple structure with a gate passage running beneath a series of arches. During the thirteenth century a chapel was built over the gatehouse, and the narrow lancet windows can be noted from the passage approach. A further extension to the gatehouse, built above the chapel, was added in the fourteenth century, and later still a barbican was erected.

Prudhoe Castle came into the possession of the notorious Percy family in 1398 through marriage, when the male line of the Unfraville family ceased. Despite several periods of forfeiture over a 200 year period, the castle is still owned by the Duke of Northumberland, who is a direct descendant of the mighty fourteenth century Northumberland baron, Sir Henry Percy.

Although continuing to be inhabited, during the seventeenth century Prudhoe Castle had become largely ruinous and within another 100 years it had started to collapse. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the 2nd Duke of Northumberland carried out essential repairs to the tower and walls, but most of the ruins were cleared at this time. Further renovation work was undertaken in 1912 and, since 1966 it has been regularly maintained by the State.

Open:

April - October
Daily

OS Grid Ref: NZ 092634

Prudhoe
Northumberland NE42 6NA

Tel : +44 (0) 1661 833459

Managed by English Heritage

Web site : www.english-heritage.org.uk

Find exact location using Multimap

Rochester Castle

Situated along the River Medway, Rochester Castle was one of the first English castles to be rebuilt in stone, and this early stone work was carried out by Gundolf, Bishop of Rochester during the late eleventh century. Renowned as a very able builder of stone structures, Gundolf was responsible for the old Rochester Cathedral, as well as the Tower of London.

In 1127, custody of the castle was given to the Archbishop of Canterbury, and remained under the same authority for the next 90 years. During this time, the huge, square keep was built from Kentish ragstone. Still standing in substantially good condition, this great tower, some 113 ft (34.5m) high consists of a basement and three floors, the second floor rising through two storeys.

Access to the keep was, traditionally, through a first floor forebuilding, an additional defence measure to protect the main part of the keep. On the second floor, above the castle entrance was the chapel, and some measure of it's original splendour is still apparent in the surviving vaulting and the

beautifully decorated windows. The basement, a dark room used for storing goods, is lit only through small ventilation holes. On the first floor, although with the emphasis very much on defence, the evidence of fireplaces and garderobes indicate that this was an important area for conducting the business of the castle. A much grander and more open aspect is apparent on the second floor of the keep, where the Great Hall was situated, with the Great Chamber beyond - formerly believed to have been the state apartment of the archbishop. Some of the richly carved detail still exists around the fireplaces, doors and windows to give an idea of how elaborately decorated this floor would have been. Surrounding the upper part of the Great Hall is a mural gallery, with large window openings. Above the gallery, the uppermost level consisted of another fine room giving wonderful views across the river.

In the early thirteenth century, Rochester Castle was besieged by King John, causing such damage to the south corner of the keep that it subsequently collapsed. Shortly afterwards, the castle was given the status of a major royal stronghold, and the shattered corner of the keep was reconstructed in a cylindrical style, and further protected by the addition of a drum tower. More damage was suffered in 1264 when the castle was beseiged by Simon de Montfort's troops, but repairs were not carried out for more than 100 years. During this period of neglect, when parts of the structure were subjected to the elements, Rochester Castle began to deteriorate into a ruinous state. However, Edward III undertook a major rebuilding and restoration programme in the second half of the fourteenth century and the castle became, once again, a viable fortress.

Throughout the sixteenth century the castle had become neglected, the structure deteriorated, the keep burned out, and eventually the site was used only as a local quarry for building materials. In 1610 King James gave Rochester Castle to Sir Anthony Weldon, and it remained in the same family until 1884

despite an attempt in the late eighteenth century to have the entire castle demolished. The City of Rochester Council leased the castle grounds in 1870 to transform the area into a public park, and eventually purchased the freehold from the Weldon family. By the mid 1960's, responsibility for the castle was vested in the State in order to ensure its preservation for future generations.

Today, the castle keep or 'great tower' stands as a proud reminder of the history surrounding the old town of Rochester, with its beautiful Norman cathedral, and the quaint, cobbled streets displaying their Dickensian influences.

Open:

All year, daily
except 24-26 December
& 1 January

OS Grid Ref: TQ 742686

Rochester
Kent ME1 1SX

Tel : +44 (0) 1634 402276

Managed by English Heritage

Web site : www.english-heritage.org.uk

Find exact location using Multimap

Scarborough Castle

Situated at the edge of a cliff along the North Yorkshire coast, a naturally defended area and a perfect look-out spot, Scarborough Castle still dominates the town and harbour some 300ft (90m) below. The roughly triangular piece of ground forming the headland of Castle Hill has been occupied for over 2500 years, but the first stone fortress on the site was not built until the early twelfth century by William le Gros. Remains of his early building include a chapel, much altered in the fourteenth century, and the curtain walls which were strengthened by Henry II in the second half of the twelfth century. Henry II was also responsible for destroying the original gate tower and erecting a more elaborate, three-storey square Keep typical of that period, protected further by a traditional forebuilding.

Although the top of the Keep has disappeared, some remaining walls provide a good indication of how splendid this structure once was. Fireplaces at the first and second levels can still be seen in the walls. Nothing exists of the once mighty forebuilding except the foundations, clearly outlining its size, and estimated height of

some 40ft (12m). From the early thirteenth century the castle had become practically impregnable, although the outer defences were continually improved and reinforced over the years. Scarborough Castle was a strategically important Northern base for the Kings and Queens of England for almost five centuries, and with each new reign came further additions and improvements to the original structure.

During the fourteenth century the barbican was completed, though much altered over time. Providing extra defence to the castle grounds, the barbican comprised two half-cylindrical towers either side of a gateway, with the approach afforded even more protection from the two towers located on a flanking wall. Unremarkably, the castle suffered serious damage only twice throughout its long and chequered past. During the Civil War it was subjected to prolonged cannon fire, causing severe destruction, and in 1914 the town and castle were attacked by German battle cruisers, resulting in demolition of many of the remaining structures.

Even among the ruins, Scarborough Castle's great strength is evident, and the surviving section of Henry II's great Keep reminds the visitor of the unsettled times and changing fortunes that most of these fortresses endured.

Open:

**All year, daily
except 24-26 December
& 1 January**

OS Grid Ref: TA 050893

**Scarborough
North Yorkshire**

Tel : +44 (0) 1723 372451

Managed by English Heritage

Web site : www.english-heritage.org.uk

Find exact location using Multimap

St Mawes Castle

Until the early sixteenth century the west of Cornwall remained undefended, but an incident in the Fal estuary between a Spanish fleet and a group of French warships caused the local gentry to press King Henry VIII for some protection against any future invasions. In 1538 two blockhouses were built on opposite headlands overlooking Falmouth Bay at Pendennis Point and at St Mawes, but these were enhanced just two years later with the addition of proper castle structures.

Taking some five years, and £5,000 to complete, the main buildings at St Mawes Castle comprise a central circular keep, with three semi-circular bastions. These bastions, reaching only as far as the first level of the tower, were arranged around it in the shape of a clover leaf, with the landward-facing side of the tower providing the main entrance across a ditch. It was a typical Henry VIII artillery fort, a low round building with massively thick walls specifically designed to mount cannons on each platform. The traditionally squat profile of St Mawes would also make it an extremely difficult target for enemy ships to bombard. During

Tudor times even the roof was used as a gun platform, and the small domed turret was utilised as a look-out point. Internally, the keep was of a fairly standard layout. In the basement a well and all the accoutrements of a kitchen, and on the floor above would have been the garrison's mess room. On the top floor the space was divided between barracks for the men, and hand-gun positions. The bastions contained most of the castle's heavy armour.

Despite it's defensive strength from a sea attack, St Mawes did not have a commanding landward position. Positioned at the foot of a hill it was always going to be vulnerable from a land attack, and this was proved during the Civil War when the royalist governor of the castle surrendered without even a shot being fired. Almost from the beginning, Pendennis was deemed the more important of the two castles, receiving a costly Elizabethan enlargement at the end of the sixteenth century, and being given additional guns from St Mawes. It is possible that improved defences, in the form of additional angle bastions, were introduced at St Mawes at about the same time.

After the Civil War the castle fell into a period of neglect, but it was given a mid-eighteenth century 'make-over' when a new Sea Battery was created. By the first decade of the nineteenth century, buildings had been demolished, gun carriages were rotting, and some of the wooden barracks had been sold off. The Grand Sea Battery was subsequently re-built, and a new magazine created. Upgrading and regular maintenance continued through the twentieth century to cope with the ever-changing demands of modern warfare. Throughout, St Mawes was continually occupied by military forces until well after the end of the Second World War.

That it has survived to such a remarkable degree must be due largely to the fact that it was considered the least significant of the Falmouth defences. The external stonework has suffered little, and few modifications have been made to the original castle. One

of the most surprising features at St Mawes is the amount and quality of carved detail to be seen. Henry's coastal forts were usually solid, utilitarian outposts designed primarily to ward off attackers. This lavish display of the King's wealth and power is unknown in any other military stronghold of his time. Today, a walk around St Mawes Castle is literally like stepping back in time. Now extremely peaceful, and commanding wonderful views across the picturesque bay, it is very easy to visualise how soldiers lived and worked in this 'homely' castle.

Open: **OS Grid Ref: SW 842328**

April - October, daily   **St Mawes**
November - March   **Cornwall TR2 3AA**
Daily, except Mon & Tues
Closed 24-26 Decmber
& 1 January   **Tel : +44 (0) 1326 270526**

Managed by English Heritage

Web site : www.english-heritage.org.uk

Find exact location using Multimap

Tattershall Castle

Although a castle was first erected at Tattershall in the early thirteenth century, it probably amounted to little more than a fortified stone house. But when it passed to Lord Cromwell in the fifteenth century, he transformed the insignificant remains to provide an extremely comfortable residence, and a place where he could entertain guests in a manner that befitted his important office. Today, the huge red-brick tower that survives is an imposing reminder of Lord Cromwell's power and wealth.

At the time of Tattershall Castle's grand rebuilding programme, brick had become more fashionable than stone and Cromwell had nearly one million bricks made from the local clay to complete his project. The five-storey rectangular tower with octagonal corner

turrets contained a magnificent suite of apartments for Cromwell's personal use. Now marooned as a single unit, the tower was originally adjoined to the main residential buildings of the castle, and surrounded by service ranges. Virtually none of these other buildings have survived to any extent, with the exception of the small guardhouse at the modern entrance. To the south of the Great Tower at the edge of the inner moat, the brick foundations to the fifteenth century kitchens are still in situ, and a ruinous building in the outer ward probably served as stables. An arrangement of bridges and small gatehouses were placed around the outer and inner moats, and fragments of some of these structures are still visible.

At first glance, the 80ft (24m) high Great Tower of Tattershall Castle looks formidable and quite impossible to penetrate should it come under attack. Despite the thickness of the walls, a closer look at the building reveals that many of the 'defensive' features were, in fact, incorporated only to embellish the façade. Large arched windows with beautiful tracery run round all sides of the tower, from top to bottom, allowing plenty of light into the lofty rooms but providing little in the way of protection. Inside the rooms are laid out in a uniform fashion on each floor, one large central area or hall with smaller rooms located in three of the corner turrets, and a spiral staircase in the other turret. Each main area had a great fireplace, and all four of these have now been restored and returned to Tattershall Castle through Lord Curzon's efforts in the early twentieth century.

After Cromwell's death, the castle was stripped of valuables by his heirs, and it is doubtful whether it was lived in again until it fell into Crown possession as a consequence of the Wars of the Roses. From the last quarter of the sixteenth century until the end of the seventeenth century, the castle was owned by the Earls of Lincoln. For the next 200 years it was left abandoned, and at the mercy of the elements. With most of the castle having been

demolished already, there was a real danger that the tower's days were also numbered. Looking at the wonderfully preserved state of the Great Tower today, it is difficult to imagine the dereliction that Lord Curzon beheld when he decided to purchase Tattershall Castle in 1911. Having recognised its historical worth, he ensured that future generations could once again enjoy some of the former splendour of Cromwell's great Lincolnshire masterpiece.

Open:

OS Grid Ref: TF 211575

March - Sat & Sun only
April - October, daily
except Thurs & Fri
November - mid December,
Sat & Sun only

Tattershall
Lincolnshire LN4 4LR

Tel : +44 (0) 1526 342543

Managed by The National Trust

Web site : www.nationaltrust.org.uk

Find exact location using Multimap

The Tower of London

An amazing and eventful history began in 1067, when the Tower of London was no more than a simple enclosure constructed by William the Conqueror in the south-eastern corner of the old Roman City. The magnificent spectacle, now recognised the world over as part of the London skyline, was one of the first great towers in Britain. When William began his vast tower, he obviously wanted to impress his power upon England and leave the people in no doubt as to who now ruled the country. Completed towards the end of the eleventh century by his son, Rufus, the tower held its first prisoner in 1100.

Practically square in design, the three-storey Tower dominated the site from all angles, and has barely altered to this day.

During the twelfth century only minor building works and some fortification to the south side of the site was carried out, but in the next century a dramatic conversion was instigated by Henry III, creating a resplendent palace and fortress. Much of the inner curtain wall was erected during this period, along with the majority of its thirteen towers and several domestic buildings, although most of these have since disappeared. The King had a passion for Gothic architecture, and this remains very much in evidence today. It was at this time that the White Tower acquired its name, having been completely 'whitewashed', both inside and out.

With continuing enthusiasm for this project his son, Edward I, completed the outer curtain wall with its six flanking towers, and built a new entrance from the city through Lion Gate on Tower Hill. This entrance passing through a series of drawbridges at Lion Tower, Middle Tower and Byward Tower, is how the public access the Tower today. The site was also accessible from the River Thames through St Thomas Gate at the bottom of the tower. This tower, also built by Edward to house his apartments, was dedicated to the unfortunate archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Becket.

Work on such a major scale has not been carried out since the thirteenth century, and the present layout of the Tower of London is a fairly accurate representation of how it would have appeared in Edward's time. Minor additions and improvements have been made within the inner bailey, such as the Queen's House during the reign of Henry VIII, the New Armouries of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and the Waterloo Barracks and Fusiliers Museum during the nineteenth/twentieth century.

Throughout history, the Tower of London has played many significant roles, from a Norman castle, to a wondrous palace, and from a grim medieval prison for those awaiting a gruesome death, to a famous treasure house. In this latter role as an important stronghold, the Tower has housed the Crown Jewels for several

centuries, and exhibits a fine collection of armour. At various times the Tower has also held the Royal Mint, the Royal Menagerie (until the animals were moved to Regents Park), and public records.

The Tower of London exhibits a magnitude and splendour beyond description, resulting from its rich and diverse history spanning eleven centuries. Coupled with the fact that it has been regularly maintained and restored without any substantial structural alterations, this monument surely is a key element in the heritage of England's capital city.

Open:

All year, daily
except 24-26 December
& 1 January

OS Grid Ref: TQ 336806

HM Tower of London
London
EC3N 4AB

Tel: +44 (0) 870 756 6060

Managed by Historic Royal Palaces

Web site : www.hrp.org.uk

Find exact location using Multimap

Tintagel Castle

Tintagel Castle stands on the wild and rugged north coast of Cornwall and, as a consequence, has suffered much erosion over the centuries. The site is split into two distinct segments: the landward section containing the remains of the upper and lower wards that stand rather precariously on the edge of a crumbling precipice; and the inner ward that lies on the narrow ridge linking the projecting headland to the mainland.

It is not known for certain who built the medieval castle but evidence suggests it was Richard, Earl of Cornwall (brother to Henry III), as he acquired the site c1234, which seems to coincide with the date of the walled remains. The Norman foundation of the castle has been attributed to Reginald de Dunstanville, a previous Earl of Cornwall from the mid-twelfth century. From twentieth century excavations, much evidence was found to support occupation of this site from Roman times, when tin mining activities would have been well under way. But by the beginning of the seventh century it would seem that the 'island' was deserted for the next 400 years. No explanation can be found for this sudden

departure, or indeed why the people returned at the end of the first millenium, when the little Christian chapel of St Julitte was built.

Even now, the origins of Tintagel Castle are surrounded by intrigue and mystery, but what is known is that it was not inhabited for any great length of time. Documented evidence records that the castle was in a poor state of repair during the fourteenth century, the Great Hall apparently being roofless. By 1483 the castle was entirely derelict, although the Chapel of St Julitte was still in use. Consequently, the castle remains are sparse. The inner ward contains the most substantial surviving masonry, with a few of the fragmented walls of the Great Hall standing to a reasonable height. Foundations show the hall to have been some 80ft (21m) long and 36ft (10.7m) wide. Much of the site was restored during Victorian times, including the castellated North wall which makes a striking picture set against the rugged Atlantic coastline.

Factually, little is known about the history of the recent castle, but myth and legend have been associated with Tintagel since the Dark Ages. When the Romans abandoned the site, who did occupy this harsh and inhospitable headland, battered by the unforgiving seas? Perhaps it would have been the kind of place sought by a Celtic Christian community or, more likely, the site of a royal stronghold for the early Cornish kings. In the twelfth century, Geoffrey of Monmouth wrote about 'the palace that belonged to Gorlois Duke of Cornwall whose wife, Igerna, one day aroused the passions of King Uther Pendragon. A dispute ensued over his unwanted attentions, and Uther laid siege to the palace. Unable to breach the walls Uther, assisted by the magician Merlin, assumed the image of Gorlois one night and entered the castle unnoticed to seduce Igerna. The son borne of this night was to be the young King Arthur'. Whether Geoffrey's words were based on fact or romantic fiction is uncertain, because the chronicle was written some 600 years after Arthur's supposed reign.

Nevertheless, it is a legend that has intrigued countless generations, and will no doubt continue to do so.

Whatever the truth, it is reasonable to assume that this area was the stronghold of past Cornish Kings simply by the fact that Richard built the modern castle here. There was no military or strategic benefit in building a castle there, so we must assume it was done out of the desire to build a castle on the site where his legendary ancestors had held court.

A visit to Tintagel is a unique and thought-provoking experience, as it is very difficult not to become engrossed in the mystique that shrouds its past. The castle site is quite difficult to negotiate with its endless, steep steps and rough pathways, but its magnetic charm is definitely worth the physical effort.

Open:

All year, daily
except 24-26 December
& 1 January

OS Grid Ref: SX 048891

Tintagel
Cornwall PL34 0HE

Tel : +44 (0) 1840 770328

Managed by English Heritage

Web site : www.english-heritage.org.uk

Find exact location using Multimap

Warwick Castle

Living under constant threat of invasion from the Danes, the Anglo-Saxons built an earthen rampart to protect their hilltop settlement overlooking the River Avon in 914. A century and a half later, the first Norman castle was erected at Warwick. The early wooden fort, typical of William the Conqueror's motte and bailey strongholds, was eventually replaced by a stone shell keep and curtain walls enclosing more sophisicated domestic accommodation in the mid-thirteenth century. But the original earthworks are still very much in evidence, including the high conical motte raised by William I in 1068.

During the second half of the fourteenth century a general reconstruction of Warwick Castle took place, and it is mainly

work from this period that has survived to the present day. An imposing gatehouse and barbican were positioned at the centre of the north-east curtain, and an enormous tower was incorporated into each angle of the wall. Caesar's Tower is some 100ft (30m) above courtyard level, but Guy's Tower soars to 128ft (37.2m). Although quite different in shape, both towers contain extravagant vaulting on all five levels. The range of magnificent domestic buildings, created along the east curtain above the steep cliff to the river, date from the same period. Most of these rooms were completely transformed in Jacobean times when Fulke Greville, a poet and statesman, made Warwick Castle into a luxurious palace. Several subsequent remodellings and restorations have resulted in a display of quality and splendour that could match any stately home. Successive Earls of Warwick lived here until 1978, when it was sold to a leisure group, and since that time many permanent exhibitions have been arranged throughout the castle.

Gradually changing from the impregnable medieval fortress to the sumptuous home of the Grevilles, Warwick Castle can boast a truly gruesome past. It has witnessed murder and violence, suffered attack, experienced wars, and been involved in royal and political treachery. In less turbulent times, it has played host to Royalty, been the centre of elaborate entertaining, and provided the setting for society gatherings. When the grounds were landscaped, and the gardens established in the eighteenth century, the remains of the octagonal shell keep became a feature on 'the mound', and the rooms of the splendid castle-cum-palace were filled with fine furniture and art.

After one thousand years of making history, the immense strength and proportions of Warwick Castle make it a formidable sight even for visitors in peacetime. Challenging though the steep ramparts and huge fourteenth century towers may be, they are all fully explorable. Caesar's Tower is an incredible wall-tower of unique design, from the base of its plinth to the French-style

double parapet. In the lowest chamber was the vaulted dungeon, a grim and daunting place for prisoners facing any length of confinement. Guy's Tower is a twelve-sided construction, with a machicolated crown, but the internal arrangements are basically the same.

Warwick Castle is quoted as being 'the finest medieval castle in England', and it would be difficult to dispute this. It certainly represents the ultimate experience for 'living' our history, with every part of the castle highlighting a different period to investigate.

Open:

All year, daily
except 25 December

OS Grid Ref: SP 284648

Warwick
Warwickshire CV34 4QU

Tel : +44 (0) 870 442 2000

Managed by The Tussauds Group

Web site : www.warwick-castle.co.uk

Find exact location using Multimap

Windsor Castle

As the oldest Royal residence in Britain to have remained in constant use by successive Monarchs, Windsor Castle represents an amazing transformation from basic Norman stronghold to palatial modern residence. Constructed as a timber Motte and Bailey castle c1080, the design was unusual by the fact that it had two baileys, the upper ward and lower ward. The oldest surviving part of Henry II's castle is the round tower that still occupies the earthen mound. It was during Henry's time that two separate blocks of state apartments were built, one for use when entertaining his court in the lower ward, and the other in the upper ward for the Royal Family's private use.

Henry III continued the work of improving the castle, and built the first chapel, but the most dramatic changes were made during Edward III's reign in the fourteenth century. In 1348 the lower ward was transformed for the new college of St George, and in 1357 work began on the new gothic palace in the upper ward, under the direction of the Bishop of Winchester. On completion of these substantial works, little more was altered throughout the

medieval period. Edward IV built the present St George's Chapel, Henry VII and his granddaughter, Elizabeth I, remodelled the state apartments, Henry VIII built the entrance gate to the lower ward, and Mary Tudor created the lodgings on the southern side of the lower ward.

Captured by parliamentarian forces and used as a prison during the Civil War, Windsor Castle received a major refurbishment after the reformation of the Monarchy in 1660. Charles II took eleven years to create some of the finest Baroque interiors ever seen in England, lavishly embellished with Grinling Gibbons wood carvings, and ceiling paintings by Antonio Verrio, some of which survive to this day.

The later Stuart and Early Hanoverian Monarchs preferred living at Hampton Court Palace and the importance of Windsor Castle subsequently declined. However, by the end of George III's reign, the castle was once more being used as the Royal Family's main residence. George IV continued the tradition, taking up residence in 1828. It was during this period that Windsor Castle was given its present, distinctive gothic exterior.

With Queen Victoria's accession to the throne, Windsor Castle enjoyed its heyday. The British Empire was at its peak, the Queen's many children had married into most of the royal houses of Europe, and Victoria's popularity made her, and Windsor, the centre of attention worldwide. This period of Royal domination and success was saddened by the early death of Prince Albert at Windsor, on 14th December 1861.

Little would have changed from that day to this had it not been for the disastrous fire in 1992. With numerous staterooms in the upper ward destroyed, a huge rebuilding project began and was completed on 20th November 1997, exactly five years to the day from when the raging inferno took hold of the Castle. It was a time

of great joy for the Queen, not only to witness the results of the various skills and hard work put into the long and costly restoration, but also that it coincided with her 50th Wedding Anniversary.

Today the Royal Family is referred to as the 'House of Windsor', and the castle attracts many thousands of visitors from all around the world who wish to admire the spectacular state apartments and the breathtaking perpendicular architecture of St George's Chapel.

Open:

All year, daily except 18 April, 6 June & 24-26 December (Subject to change at short notice)

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