

Historical Insights

Focus on Teaching



MEDIEVAL CASTLES

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ISBN 978-0-9564603-2-5

February 2010

Published by History at the Higher Education Academy

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Introduction

Ask anyone to visualise the Middle Ages and, almost inevitably, they conjure up the image of the castle. Together with the great cathedrals and parish churches, castles are one of the most vivid symbols of our medieval heritage. Castles are ‘tangible’ monuments that exert a powerful hold on the imagination of students and academics alike.

The medieval castle is therefore a potentially valuable teaching resource. Castles can provide an excellent starting point for the study of medieval history, especially for those students who, due to the constraints of school curricula, are only familiar with 20th-century history. The variety and distribution of castles across Britain ensures that they can offer tremendous potential for field trips and seminars. Alongside their

familiar role as military fortress, castles also provide potential for the study of topics as various as the household, attitudes to authority, lordly lifestyles, landscape design and spirituality. But when teaching the medieval castle, certain problems can accompany the undoubted benefits. The study of this topic frequently does not fit easily into ‘traditional’ undergraduate units in medieval history or archaeology. This is due, in part, to the multifarious nature of the castle itself. Castles had a multiplicity of roles in the medieval period and, according to the demands of the undergraduate unit in question, often appear in only one of their many forms: as military fortresses, estate centres, as part of the infrastructure of government, as tools of conquest. Only rarely is the unified concept of ‘the medieval castle’ tackled in undergraduate seminars. Moreover, various structural problems ensure that teaching castles can frankly be difficult. Many castles are physically inaccessible to campus-based undergraduates and this obstacle is compounded by the fact that students themselves, particularly those registered on history degree programmes, often find it difficult to interpret complex architectural arguments or follow the nuances of archaeological reports.

It is often the case that, before the really interesting questions concerning castles can be attempted, it is necessary to wade through a vast mass of material on architectural history, archaeology and contextual social history – something that seems to take us



Battle Abbey, Sussex

away from the castle itself. What follows here is intended as a guide to how the castle can be placed at the centre of teaching and used as a vehicle for exploring wider issues and problems in the study of medieval society. It is by no means prescriptive, but highlights a number of key points debated in recent years and offers some direction on important pieces of work. The focus is very much on England and Wales, but the bibliography does include material from Continental Europe and the Holy Land.

Fast track to castles



Orford Castle, Suffolk

In recent years, castle studies have been dramatically transformed. Scholars from a variety of backgrounds have seriously questioned, and in some cases seemingly overturned, much of the received wisdom about castles handed down to us by previous generations. The main focus of this new thinking concerns the military role of the castle. Rather than judging castles as primarily military buildings, the current historiographical trend is to see them as noble residences built in a military style. This is undoubtedly a shock to most undergraduates, as

the ‘battering rams and boiling oil’ approach of the military engineer is still the dominant perception of the medieval castle. The clearest way of explaining when and why this change came about is to discuss castle historiography in some detail. This also serves as a platform for the various teaching topics suggested below, all of which relate back to a theme that has been at the centre of debate for over a century: what were castles actually for? Such has been the pace of change within castle studies that it has been fashionable in recent years to sum up the historiography of the late 19th and 20th centuries with reference to what has become known as the ‘castle story’. In essence, this represents the overarching analytical framework, explaining castles and castle development, which characterised the orthodoxy for many years. Although some of its basic tenets have been subject to rigorous debate by scholars, the ‘castle story’ is one that is elegant, highly persuasive and remarkably enduring. Even for students encountering castles for the first time, much of the story is familiar and provides a good basis from which to begin further study.

The castle story

The 'story' begins when the castle (together with feudalism, the social organisation which supported it) was introduced into England in 1066 during William the Conqueror's invasion of England. In the Norman settlement, established following the victory at Hastings, William and his followers studded England with castles in order to pacify a potentially rebellious population. These castles were chiefly of motte and bailey type (the motte being an artificial mound of earth and the bailey the adjacent enclosure) which had the advantages of being quick to build and offered good protection for the invaders. Once the immediate dangers precipitated by the Conquest had passed, however, new threats emerged, this time from the Norman barons themselves, who used their castles for private war – as seen during the reign of King Stephen. If the monarch was not powerful enough to subdue them, barons would usurp royal authority and fight each other (and the king), using their castles as bases. It was only in the late 12th century, as siege weaponry developed, the costs of building in stone became prohibitive, and royal authority was strengthened, that the evils of private castle building began to be curbed.



Beaumaris Castle, Anglesey

Thereafter, the development of castles became something of a Darwinian evolutionary struggle between attacker and defender and the form of the castle changed in response to the demands of siege warfare. Round towers took the place of square towers in order to counter the threat of mining; the development of the gatehouse reflected the need to protect the weak point of the castle gate; water defences were extended to prevent attacking engines from reaching the walls; concentric lines of defensive walls maximised the castle's defensive firepower. These developments in military science achieved their high point in the late 13th century with the castles built in north Wales by King Edward I. Castles like Conwy and Beaumaris represented the high point of medieval military architecture. In the 14th and 15th centuries the castle went into decline. Conflict was more likely to be resolved by pitched battle, rather than by the siege (as during the Wars of the Roses)

and cannon made the castle increasingly obsolete. In response, the castle increasingly made concessions to domestic comfort. The late medieval castle might still reflect a concern to deter local violence, but the classic fortified residence of the medieval regional magnate was slowly evolving into the country house. By the early 16th century, the strong Tudor monarchy had brought the medieval baronage to heel and the construction of a chain of artillery fortifications by Henry VIII showed that it was now the state that had responsibility for war and national defence. The age of the castle, and thus the castle 'story', was over.

Historiographical commentary

The origins of the castle story (at least in its modern form) can be traced to the late 19th century. At this time, castles were studied almost exclusively as fortifications and a new category of reference – 'Military Architecture' – provided a structure for this study. Castles were the medieval equivalent of the artillery forts and bastions that had been built in Europe between the 16th and 17th centuries. The warlike image of the castle also dovetailed well with then current ideas about the nature of medieval European society. In an age when life was nasty, brutish and short, the castle was the lair of the robber baron. In British historiography one of the first major studies in castles and castle-building was G. T. Clark's *Mediaeval Military Architecture in England* (1884–5). This work comprised a detailed survey of sites in Britain and France but an extended introduction charted castle development. Clark saw castles primarily as military structures and his interpretation of many individual buildings owed much to his background in civil engineering. Clark's work was highly inventive, but it was two books published in 1912 that would dominate castle studies for



Leeds Castle, Kent

decades. The first was Ella Armitage's, *The Early Norman Castles of the British Isles*. Armitage, armed with a combination of Ordnance Survey maps and references to early castles, culled from documentary sources, demonstrated that it had been the Normans who introduced the castle to England. This was not an entirely new idea – the historian J. H. Round had also written on this subject some years earlier – but Armitage and Round had certainly blown out of the water the idea that mottes belonged to the Roman, Viking or Anglo-Saxon period. Armitage also discussed the siting and distribution of Norman sites and offered a tentative analysis of their landscape context. In this, and in many other senses, her work was pioneering. The second crucial work in the development of the castle story was A. Hamilton Thompson's *Military Architecture in England during the Middle Ages*. This was primarily a study of architectural evidence and, in a particularly persuasive argument, charted the evolution of the castle across several centuries. The engine driving forward castle development was the need to keep intruders out. Characteristically, he explained that 'it is obvious that, in the history of military architecture, any improvement in defence is the consequence of improved methods of attack', and much of his work follows this logic. By the early decades of the 20th century, then, the castle was firmly established as a 'Norman import' and a template existed which explained the changing form of the castle from the 11th century to the end of the Middle Ages.

The development of an orthodoxy

The inter-war and immediate post-war periods saw the further development of this military interpretation of castles. The decades after 1945 were dominated by the work of three scholars: A. Taylor, R. Allen Brown and D. J. Cathcart-King. Arguably, the work of the latter two figures took the military interpretation of castles to its logical conclusion. The period after the Second World War was a time when new research produced significant quantities of information about castles: the publication of the medieval volumes of the *History of the King's Works* marked a watershed in terms of information on royal castle-building and Taylor and Brown both published ground-breaking work on patterns of royal castle-building in England and Wales. At the same time D. Renn published his study of Norman castles, which provided valuable new information on castles of the earlier period. An enormous amount of documentary research and fieldwork allowed King in 1984 to publish his massive *Castellarium Anglicanum*, an inventory of castle sites in England and Wales, and, later, *The Castle in England and Wales: An Interpretative History* (1988).

In terms of their ideas on the function of castles, Brown and King allied themselves particularly closely to the basic tenets first formulated by Armitage and Hamilton Thompson. Brown's best known work, *English Medieval Castles* (1954, 1962, published as *English Castles* in the third edition, 1976 – now reprinted by Boydell and Brewer) leaves no doubt as to the military rationale that he believed governed castle



Conwy Castle, Wales

development. A castle was 'a fortified residence of a lord' and, despite the fact that new archaeological work necessitated the rewriting of earlier chapters for the third edition, he stuck closely to the idea that the castle was both feudal and military and had come to England at the time of the Conquest. The chapter headings in *English Medieval Castles* adhered to the familiar narrative: the development of keeps is described in a chapter entitled 'The Perfected Castle', that for the Edwardian castles of North Wales is entitled 'Apogee', but hereafter the castle goes into 'Decline'. The extended introduction to King's *Castellarium Anglicanum* perhaps owed more to the work of Armitage in that it deals substantially with issues such as siting and distribution, but again the military character of castles as private fortresses was not in doubt.

This is not to say that the residential functions of castles were unappreciated or ignored at this time. Particularly innovative in the 1950s and 1960s was the work of P. Faulkner, who analysed castles in terms of their internal domestic arrangements and tried to relate the design of castles to their residential purpose. It is also worth noting that even some of the greatest exponents of the military school were puzzled over the seeming weakness of even some of the most famous castles. King speculated about castles such as Portchester, where a Norman keep stands in the corner of a Roman shore fort. The Roman structure exhibited the militarily advantageous rounded towers that allowed flanking fire, but the Norman architects ignored this design and chose to build in an inferior square style. King concluded that siege warfare must have been in its infancy at this time if builders could apparently disregard such obvious weaknesses. Brown was also troubled by the fact that much of his own documentary research pointed to the conclusion that the majority of castles spent most of their time at peace and were badly prepared for conflict. The puzzles that presented themselves at this time that would ultimately be responsible for the change in attitude that would come later.

The questioning of the military orthodoxy

The military interpretation of castles first began to be questioned in the 1960s when archaeological research began to address the problem of castle origins. As a result of systematic field survey, it was realised that many of the very earliest Norman castles were not of motte and bailey type but were ringworks (an oval enclosure with bank and ditch). In 1966, B. K. Davison pointed out that there seemed to be a lack of mottes in Normandy prior to 1066 and that the motte and bailey may only have developed during the Norman Conquest of England. In 1967, he went further and suggested (before a major series of archaeological excavations at a number of early Norman castles designed to test the point) that ringworks must have been known in pre-Conquest England and implied that if a castle was defined as a 'fortified residence of a lord' then, de facto, the idea of private fortification being new to England in 1066 was incorrect. This provoked a fierce backlash from R. Allen Brown who vigorously restated the case for the castle being a Norman import and suggested that Ella Armitage had answered all the major questions over origins a generation earlier. As it transpired, the series of excavations in the late 1970s did not come to any clear-cut conclusions on the issue but an important line of future enquiry had been put on the agenda.

An article by Charles Coulson entitled 'Structural Symbolism in Medieval Castle Architecture' (1979) was the starting point for much of the 'new thinking' on castles that has emerged over recent years. Coulson suggested that the 'military' architectural features of castles might not necessarily have served a utilitarian function, but instead some kind of symbolic purpose. While acknowledging the need for domestic protection, Coulson suggested that the construction of a crenellated building could be intended to stand as an emblem of lordly status, rather than a response to military insecurity. Moreover, it was suggested that one of the dominant themes of castle architecture was the element of nostalgia, not the desire to build the most perfect military structure. Not only were castles aesthetically pleasing to the medieval eye, but also their construction embodied 'the moeurs of chivalry, the life-style of the great, and the legends of the past'. The idea that arrowloops, gunports and battlements might have been designed within these frames of reference was a major departure from previous arguments. Perhaps surprisingly, the wider academic community largely ignored this article and the 1980s saw a steady stream of work, but nothing hinting at the turnaround in thinking that was to come later. Coulson continued the themes of his 1979 article, particularly on the topic of fortress customs. Colin Platt's *The Medieval Castle* (1982) stuck to the traditional narrative but the chivalric elements of castle-building informed much of the discussion on the castles of the later medieval period. M.W. Thompson's *The Decline of the Castle* offered

a valuable survey of later medieval building, but its title reflected the orthodox view of the period. King's *The Castle in England and Wales* (1988) was perhaps the last monograph that could be said to fit easily within the military mould. By the late 1980s, although important elements of the military interpretation had been queried, it could not be said that a new orthodoxy had been developed or that the wider academic community had necessarily accepted any of the new thinking. In the early 1990s, however, the debate over the military role of the castle suddenly came to the fore and the debate crystallised over one castle in particular: Bodiam in Sussex.

The battle for Bodiam



Bodiam Castle, Sussex

Bodiam has always been a well-known castle; it is remarkably well preserved and its watery setting makes it extremely photogenic. Although its description as 'an old soldier's dream house' was coined as early as the 1960s, the castle has traditionally been seen as one of the last military buildings of its kind, a final salute to a martial role that had diminished over the previous century. The purpose of Bodiam is seemingly evident in the licence to crenellate granted to Sir Edward Dallyngrigge in 1385 'to make into a castle his manor house of Bodiam, near the sea, in the county of Sussex, for the defence of the adjacent country'. And, superficially, the design of the castle displays a utilitarian, military purpose. The moat prevents anybody gaining access to the curtain walls, the symmetrical design allows flanking fire and it also contains early gunports – its up-to-date design even allows provision for the weapons that would ultimately make the castle obsolete.

The scholarly assault on Bodiam came from two directions. Charles Coulson offered a critique of the documentary evidence for the castle and its architectural remains, while Paul Everson and Christopher Taylor, as part of a survey of the castle for the Royal Commission for Historic Monuments, examined the landscape context of the site. Although working independently of each other, the conclusions these scholars reached were remarkably similar.

The martial language of the licence is explicable given the aristocratic obsession with military culture that existed throughout the medieval period. However, when it comes to the building itself, the defensive provision is in fact highly suspect. The gunports and murder holes are impractical and could never be militarily effective, the battlements are too small, the moat is shallow and easily drained, access around the parapets is difficult and the whole site is overlooked by higher ground. Rather, the castle's architecture is deliberately nostalgic; it harks back to the 13th century and the perceived 'golden age' of castle-building during the reign of Edward I.

Considerable effort went into improving the castle's external appearance; the provision of a moat ensures that the building looks larger than is actually the case, an impression heightened by the size of the windows and the battlements, which are proportioned to give the impression of strength. The relatively cramped domestic courtyard is something of an anticlimax: in reality, it is a medieval manor house. Confirmation of this analysis was suggested by a survey of the landscape context of the site. Rather than being a defence against mining, it was suggested that the castle moat was an ornamental lake, setting the building off to maximum visual advantage. In addition to the moat, the castle was surrounded by a series of ponds. Any visitor wishing to approach the castle did so via a circuitous route from which the aesthetic appeal of the building and its surroundings could be appreciated. This latter characteristic seemed confirmed by the reinterpretation of the earthworks on the rising ground above the castle as a viewing, rather than an artillery, platform. Taken together, the historical and architectural evidence suggested that Bodiam Castle was a residence built in a martial style – its 'military' elements part of an architectural language of display – all standing at the centre of a contemporary 'designed landscape'. This is certainly a long way from the idea of a fortress intended to inhibit French raiding.

The 'Battle for Bodiam' was something of a cause célèbre within castle studies but, such has been the pace of change, it



is now something of a cliché. Nevertheless, it did kick-start a serious debate. Although the problems with the military orthodoxy had already been signalled some years before, Bodiam became the central focus of the discussion. A particularly influential review article by David Stocker, 'The Shadow of the General's Armchair', put Bodiam centre stage and gave credence to the revisionist line; it was suggested that what had hindered the study of castles was the retrospective application of modern tactical thinking to a period where such ideas never existed.

Post Bodiam

In the ten years or so since the 'Battle for Bodiam', several publications on castles have appeared including a number of general narrative accounts and specialised monographs. *Medieval Fortifications* by J. Kenyon summarised much archaeological work on castles in England and Wales and this year also saw the publication of N. J. G. Pounds' *The Medieval Castle in England and Wales*, a massive study of castle-building largely based on documentary research. *The Rise of the Castle* by M. W. Thompson stuck closely to some older interpretations, but included valuable chapters on castles as settlements. In 1992, T. McNeill's *Castles* rejected a traditional chronological approach in favour of the social and cultural dimensions of castle-building. The same year saw the publication of P. Barker and R. Higham's study *Timber Castles*, which was the first major survey of earth and timber castles and dispelled the idea that such fortifications were the poor relation of their masonry counterparts.

The 1990s also saw a progressive stream of publications all overtly contributing in some way to the arguments kick-started by Bodiam. Indeed, the debate has moved on so fast that as early as 1996 warnings were sounded about a 'bandwagon effect', whereby 'status' replaced 'war' as a simplistic buzzword for the development of castles. Considerable analysis and reinterpretation of key buildings in the 'castle story' took place at this time. One of the most influential was T. A. Heslop's study of Orford castle in Suffolk, where the traditional military rationale of Henry II's keep was rejected in favour of a more ideological explanation for the design of the building. Work by P. Dixon and P. Marshall has drawn attention to the elements of courtly chorography in the way guests entered and experienced the interior of castles and suggested new ideas for the function of keeps.

Bodiam generated a good deal of interest in the landscape context of castles and the number of 'designed landscapes' of medieval date identified has risen significantly. One of the most notable general advances has been to extend the 'revisionist' arguments in a chronological move backwards from the later medieval to the Anglo-Norman period. Assertions made ten years ago about 14th-century castles such as Bodiam are now being applied to castles such as Dover, built two centuries earlier.

Recently a series of books has emerged dealing directly with the revisionist theme. Oliver Creighton has produced a much welcome full-length study on the theme of castles and landscapes, Matthew Johnson a volume on the material role of castles in medieval society and Charles Coulson a massive historical study on the social character of fortifications in the Middle Ages. A significant body of literature now exists that details the 'revisionist' agenda specifically and it is now possible for students not only to write about, but also to critique, the newer questions posed about castles and castle-building. If a short introduction is needed to illustrate the thrust of scholarship over the past 20 years, then it is helpful to compare the approach taken in R. Allen Brown's *The Architecture of Castles* (1984) with that of O. H. Creighton and R. Higham in *Castles* (2003), both published by Shire.



Carisbrooke Castle Gate

Contemporary debates

At the time of writing, castles continue to provoke research and debate, with the disputes of the past decade continuing to exercise scholars to a greater or lesser extent. In 2007, an article by Colin Platt in *Medieval Archaeology* offered a cautionary note about trends in castle studies and in so doing presented the first real attempt in print to counter some of the 'revisionist' arguments. The argument took the form of a renewed emphasis on a military rationale and on the importance of documentary evidence as the key to understanding fundamental aspects of castle buildings. As perhaps might be expected, such a view has not passed by without comment (see Creighton and Liddiard's short piece in the following volume of *Medieval Archaeology*). Whatever line is taken, such debate does indicate that the subject still has much potential as far as undergraduate teaching is concerned.

The present time is particularly characterised by an awareness that the battles fought over the past decade have run their course, or at least brought about a change in how they are framed. There has been a distinct tendency at academic conferences to steer away from the 'form and function' arguments to more holistic interpretations that recognise the multifarious nature of the buildings, their contexts and uses in the past. For some, at least, the challenge now is twofold: to produce a research agenda for this area while continuing to exploit its fruitful relationship with other fields of research. The latter is probably key with regard to successful teaching, given that most undergraduates will be approaching castles from a strictly 'history' background.

As far as teaching medieval castles is concerned, now could be the time to ask our students some new questions and also to build upon the work of scholars, rather than inviting them to take 'sides' in a historiographical debate. While I would suggest there is still an important place for the 'Battle for Bodiam' and 'The Origins of the Castle', there is now enough secondary literature available to ask some different and perhaps more searching questions.

Teaching topics

The teaching topics suggested on the following pages offer a variety of themes all of which, in some way, relate to the broader historiographical questions outlined above. When it comes to the 'defence and defensibility' debate (something that in my experience students enjoy) several topics allow much scope for argument. Bodiam may well be old hat to many researchers in the field, but it provides an excellent introduction to the wider issues. These issues can be explored in greater detail with discussions of Norman keeps and the castles of Edward I. Other topics raise much broader issues over the nature of conflict and conquest during the medieval period. A discussion of castle warfare invites many cross-cultural comparisons (not just in the medieval period). Some topics, such as the castle as residence and as an icon of lordship, invite students to stretch themselves a little more and consider aspects beyond the 'form and function' debate.

1. The 'battle for Bodiam'

In the 1990s, Bodiam Castle in Sussex became the 'touchstone' of the wider debate on the military role of the castle. The debate turns on whether the castle of Sir Edward Dallyngrigge was an up-to-date artillery fortification built to deter French raiders or an 'old soldier's dream house'.

Sample questions

- What is the 'military' case apropos Bodiam Castle?
- What is the 'revisionist' approach to Bodiam and how is it different to earlier interpretations?
- To what extent is it possible to 'explain' the form of Bodiam?
- What are the implications of the study of Bodiam for wider issues in castle studies?
- How does Bodiam compare with contemporary use of castles in France?

Introductory texts

- C. Coulson, 'Some analysis of the castle of Bodiam, East Sussex', in Christopher Harper-Bill and Ruth Harvey (eds.) *Medieval Knighthood 4* (Woodbridge, 1992), pp. 51–107.
- O. Creighton, *Castles and Landscapes* (London, 2002).
- O. Creighton and R. Liddiard, 'Fighting yesterday's battle: beyond war or status in castle studies', *Medieval Archaeology* 52 (2008), pp. 161–9.
- J. Goodall, 'The battle for Bodiam Castle', *Country Life* 16 (1998), pp. 58–63.
- M. Johnson, *Behind the Castle Gate: From Medieval to Renaissance* (Abingdon, 2002), chapter 2.
- C. Platt, 'Revisionism in castle studies: a caution', *Medieval Archaeology* 51 (2007), pp. 83–102.
- C. Taylor, P. Everson and R. Wilson-North, 'Bodiam Castle, Sussex', *Medieval Archaeology*, 34 (1990), pp. 155–7.
- D.J. Turner, 'Bodiam, Sussex: true castle or old soldier's dream house?', in W. M. Ormrod (ed.) *England in the Fourteenth Century: Proceedings of the 1985 Harlaxton Symposium* (Woodbridge, 1986), pp. 267–77.

2. The origins of the castle in England

This issue has been under debate for a century. Did the Norman Conquest bring a new form of fortification to Anglo-Saxon England and, if not, to what extent is it possible to talk of pre-Conquest 'castles'?

Sample questions

- To what extent did Norman castles differ from Old English forms of fortification?
- Was the castle a 'Norman import'?
- What factors governed the siting and distribution of early Norman castles?

Some castles for discussion

- Goltho (Lincolnshire)
- Sulgrave (Northamptonshire)
- Castle Acre (Norfolk)
- Richmond (Yorkshire)
- Norwich (Norfolk)

Introductory texts

- E. Armitage, *The Early Norman Castles of the British Isles* (London, 1912).
- G. Beresford, *Goltho: The Development of an Early Medieval Manor c. 850–1150* (London, 1987) to be read in conjunction with P. Everson, ‘What’s in a name? “Goltho”, Goltho and Bullington’, *Lincolnshire History and Archaeology* 23 (1988), pp. 92–99.
- R. Allen Brown, ‘An historian’s approach to the origins of the castle in England’, *Archaeological Journal* 126 (1969), pp. 131–148.
- C. Coulson, ‘Peaceable Power in English Castles’, *Anglo-Norman Studies* 23 (2001), pp. 69–95.
- O. H. Creighton, *Castles and Landscapes* (London, 2003).
- B. K. Davison, ‘The origins of the castle in England’, *Archaeological Journal* 124 (1967), pp. 202–211.
- B. K. Davison, ‘Early earthwork castles: a new model’, *Chateau Gaillard* 3 (1969), pp. 37–47.
- R. Eales, ‘Royal power and castles in Norman England’, in C. Harper-Bill and R. Harvey (eds.), *Medieval Knighthood* vol. III (Woodbridge, 1990), pp. 49–78 [re-printed in Liddiard (ed.) (2003)].
- B. English, ‘Towns, mottes and ring-works of the Conquest’, in A. Ayton and J. Price (eds.), *The Medieval Military Revolution* (London, 1995), pp. 43–62.
- R. Higham and P. Barker, *Timber Castles* (London, 1992).
- E. Impey, ‘The seigneurial residence in Normandy 1125–1225: an Anglo-Norman tradition?’, *Medieval Archaeology* 43 (1999), pp. 45–73.
- R. Morris, *Churches in the Landscape* (1989).
- A. D. Saunders et al, *Five Castle Excavations: Reports on the Institute’s Research Project into the Origins of the Castle in England* (London, 1978).
- A. Williams, ‘A bell-house and a burh-geat: lordly residences in England before the Norman conquest’, *Medieval Knighthood* vol. IV (Woodbridge, 1992), pp. 221–240, [re-printed in Liddiard (ed.) (2003)].

3. The castle keep: a place of last resort?

The castle keep has long been thought of as the ‘building of last resort’. Re-interpretation of a number of buildings has suggested a more complex role for these enigmatic structures. Rather than simply representing the last bastion of defence, the donjon met more immediate social needs.

Sample questions

- What issues are at stake in the definition of the word ‘keep’?
- What was the purpose of the ‘keep’?
- How have ‘traditional’ and ‘revisionist’ approaches dealt with the development of the keep? What are their strengths and weaknesses?
- To what extent was the castle keep intended to invoke a sense of lineage?
- To what extent did keeps often look forward in terms of architecture and design, but backwards in terms of symbolism?

Some buildings for discussion:

- Chepstow (Gwent)
- Castle Acre (Norfolk)
- Castle Hedingham (Essex)
- Colchester (Essex)
- Orford (Suffolk)
- Rochester (Kent)
- The White Tower (London)

Introductory texts

- J. G. Coad and A. D. F. Streeton, 'Excavations at Castle Acre Castle, Norfolk, 1972–1977', *Archaeological Journal* 139 (1982), pp. 138–301.
- P. Dixon, 'The myth of the keep', in G. Meirion-Jones et al, *The Seigneurial Residence in Western Europe AD c. 800–1600* (BAR International Series 1088) (Oxford 2002), pp. 9–13.
- P. Dixon and P. Marshall, 'The great tower at Hedingham Castle: a reassessment', *Fortress* 18 (1993), pp. 16–23, [reprinted in Liddiard (ed.) (2003)].
- P. Dixon and P. Marshall, 'The great tower in the twelfth century: the case of Norham Castle', *Archaeological Journal* 150 (1993), pp. 410–32.
- P. J. Drury, 'Aspects of the origins and development of Colchester Castle', *Archaeological Journal* 139 (1982), pp. 302–419.
- P. J. Drury et al, 'The temple of Claudius at Colchester reconsidered', *Britannia* 15 (1984), pp. 7–50.
- E. Fernie, *The Architecture of Norman England* (Oxford, 2000).
- T. A. Heslop, 'Orford Castle: nostalgia and sophisticated living', *Architectural History*, 34 (1991), pp. 36–58, [reprinted in Liddiard (ed.) (2003)].
- T. A. Heslop, *Norwich Castle Keep: Romanesque Architecture and Social Context* (Norwich, 1994).
- E. Impey (ed.), *The White Tower* (New Haven, 2008).
- J. Kenyon and M. Thompson, 'The origin of the word "keep"', *Medieval Archaeology*, 38 (1994), pp. 175–6.
- P. Marshall, 'The great tower as residence (in the territories of the Norman and Angevin kings of England)', in G. Meirion-Jones et al, *The Seigneurial Residence in Western Europe AD c. 800–1600* (BAR International Series 1088) (Oxford 2002), pp. 27–44.
- R. C. Turner, 'The Great Tower, Chepstow Castle, Wales', *Antiquaries Journal* 84 (2004), pp. 233–316.

4. The castle as residence

Castles spent most of their time at peace. As great residences they were at the centre of complex economic networks and were the backdrop for elaborate set-piece social events. Much can be learnt about social organisation in the Middle Ages by examining the architectural remains of castles and analysing their spatial arrangement.

Sample questions

- How did the changing form of the castle reflect changes in the noble household?
- What has spatial analysis added to our knowledge of the castle?
- How and why did the domestic arrangements of castles reflect medieval notions of authority?
- To what extent was there 'feminine space' within medieval castles?

Some buildings for discussion

- Knaresborough (Yorkshire)
- Bolton (Yorkshire)
- Castle Rising (Norfolk)
- Goodrich (Herefordshire)
- Warwick (Warwickshire)
- Warkworth (Northumberland)

Introductory texts

- J.A. Ashbee, “‘The Chamber called Gloriette’: living at leisure in thirteenth- and fourteenth-century castles’, *Journal of the British Archaeological Association* 157 (2004), pp. 17–39.
- P. Dixon, ‘The donjon of Knaresborough: the castle as theatre’, *Château-Gaillard* 14 (1990), pp. 121–39.
- P. Dixon, ‘Design in castle-building: the control of access to the lord’, *Château-Gaillard* 18 (1998), pp. 47–57.
- A. Emery, *Greater Medieval Houses of England and Wales* vol. 1 (Cambridge, 1996), vol. 2 (Cambridge, 2000), vol.3 (Cambridge, 2006). These three volumes are highly detailed and beautifully illustrated works on late medieval houses. If time is short, however, an excellent précis is to be found in A. Emery, *Discovering Medieval Houses* (Princes Risborough, 2007).
- G. Fairclough, ‘Meaningful constructions: spatial and functional analysis of medieval buildings’, *Antiquity* 66 (1992), pp. 348–66.
- P.A. Faulkner, ‘Castle planning in the fourteenth century’, *Archaeological Journal* 120 (1963), pp. 215–235.
- R. Gilchrist, *Gender and Archaeology: Contesting the Past* (London, 1999).
- M. Johnson, *Behind the Castle Gate: From Medieval to Renaissance* (Abingdon, 2002).
- J. R. Mathieu, ‘New methods on old castles: generating new ways of seeing’, *Medieval Archaeology* 43 (1999), pp. 115–142.
- C. M. Woolgar, *The Great Household in Late Medieval England* (London, 1999).

5. Castle landscapes

Castles influenced the landscape and vice versa. The impact of castle-building on the natural environment manifested itself in a number of ways, but distinctly regional landscapes also affected the nature of the castle. One fruitful avenue of recent research has been the recognition that at some castles the surrounding landscape had been modified for aesthetic purposes.

Sample questions

- What were the main characteristics of medieval designed landscapes?
- Why did medieval elites take so much care over the visual appearance of their residences and what did these landscapes represent?
- To what extent were castle landscapes similar in function to those of post-medieval country houses?

Some buildings for discussion

- Kenilworth (Warwickshire)
- Castle Rising (Norfolk)
- Ludgershall (Wiltshire)
- Launceston (Cornwall)

Introductory texts

- O. Creighton, *Castles and Landscapes* (London, 2002) – especially chapters 4 and 8.
- O. Creighton and R. Higham, 'Castle studies and the "landscape" agenda', *Landscape History* 26 (2004), pp. 1–18.
- P. Everson, "'Delightfully surrounded with woods and ponds": field evidence for medieval gardens in Britain', in P. Patterson (ed.), *There by Design: Field Archaeology in Parks and Gardens* (BAR British Series 267, 1998), pp. 32–38.
- P. Everson, G. Brown and D. Stocker, 'The castle earthworks and landscape context', in P. Ellis (ed.), *Ludgershall Castle, Excavations by P. Addyman 1964–72* (Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Society Monograph Series II, 2000), pp. 97–119.
- P. Everson and T. Williamson, 'Gardens and designed landscapes', in P. Everson and T. Williamson (eds.), *The Archaeology of Landscape* (Manchester, 1998), pp. 67–94.
- P. Herring, 'Cornish Medieval Deer Parks', in R. Wilson-North (ed.), *The Lie of the Land: Aspects of the Archaeology and the History of the Designed Landscape in the South West of England* (Exeter, 2003), pp. 34–50.
- S. Landsberg, *The Medieval Garden* (London, 1995).
- R. Liddiard, *Castles in Context* (Macclesfield, 2005).
- R. Liddiard, 'Castle Rising, Norfolk: a "landscape of lordship?"', *Anglo-Norman Studies* 22 (2000), pp. 169–186.
- C. Taylor, *Parks and Gardens of Britain: A Landscape History from the Air* (Edinburgh, 1998).
- C. Taylor, 'Medieval ornamental landscapes', *Landscapes* 1 (2000), pp. 38–55.

6. The castle at war

The image of the castle under siege is one of the most powerful symbols of the Middle Ages. While sieges were dramatic events, most military encounters at castles were far removed from the Hollywood image of battering rams and boiling oil. The political context of the siege, rather than men at arms and siege engines, was usually decisive in whether a castle would stand or fall. Moreover, sieges themselves were often not a free for all, but rather followed a set of conventions.

Sample questions

- To what extent was there a strategic pattern of castles in England? Was this different on the Scottish/Welsh borders?
- To what extent did political considerations affect the course of a medieval siege?
- Were medieval sieges 'ritual' encounters?

Some sieges for discussion

- Château-Gaillard, 1204
- Dover, 1216
- Rochester, 1215
- Dover, 1261–1217
- Bedford, 1224

Introductory texts

- E. Amt, 'Besieging Bedford: military logistics in 1224', *Journal of Medieval Military History* 1 (2002), pp. 101–24.
- J. H. Beeler, 'Castles and strategy in Norman and early Angevin England', *Speculum* 31 (1956), pp. 581–601.
- J. Bradbury, *The Medieval Siege* (Woodbridge, 1992).
- R. A. Brown, *Rochester Castle* (London, 1986).
- D. A. Carpenter, *The Minority of Henry III* (London, 1990) – contains a detailed account of the siege of Bedford.
- P. Contamine (ed. and trans. M. Jones), *War in the Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1984).
- R. Eales, 'Castles and politics in England, 1215–1224', *Thirteenth-Century England* 2 (1989), pp. 23–4.
- J. Goodall, 'Dover Castle and the great siege of 1216', *Château-Gaillard* 19 (2000), pp. 91–102.
- K. Norgate, *England under the Angevin Kings* 2 (London, 1887) – a classic account of the siege of Chateau-Gaillard.
- M. Prestwich, *Armies and Warfare in the Middle Ages: The English Experience* (New Haven, 1996).
- S. Speight, 'Castle warfare in the Gesta Stephani', *Château-Gaillard* 19 (1998), pp. 269–74.
- M. Strickland and R. Hardy, *The Great Warbow: from Hastings to the Mary Rose* (Stroud, 2005).
- M. Strickland, 'Securing the north: invasion and the strategy of defence in twelfth-century Anglo-Scottish warfare', in M. Strickland (ed.) *Anglo-Norman Warfare* (Woodbridge, 1992), pp. 208–229.
- M. Strickland, *War and Chivalry: The Conduct and Perception of Warfare in England and Normandy 1066–1217* (Cambridge, 1996).
- S. Turnbull, *Samurai Warfare* (London, 1996).

7. The decline of the castle?

The period following the Black Death has often been characterised by historians as a time when the castle went into decline. By the early 16th century, purpose-built artillery forts had supplanted the castle's military function and the fortified residence evolved into the country house. Recent years have seen a re-evaluation of this period as one of decline, however, and instead emphasised the continuing vitality of noble building at the end of the Middle Ages. Is 'decline' a suitable term for the changes we see in the period 1350–1550?

Sample questions

- What was the essential form of the later medieval castle?
- How did the late medieval 'castle' differ to the Tudor 'mansion'?
- To what extent is the term 'decline' applicable to buildings erected by the nobility in the period c.1400–c.1600?

Some buildings for discussion

- Bolton Castle (Yorkshire)
- Raglan (Gwent)
- Tattershall (Lincolnshire)
- Haddon Hall (Derbyshire)
- Hardwick Hall (Derbyshire)
- Lulworth Castle (Dorset)

Introductory texts

- R. A. Brown, *English Castles*, third edition (London, 1976).
- C. Coulson, 'Structural symbolism in medieval castle architecture', *Journal of the British Archaeological Association* 132 (1979), pp. 73–90.
- C. Coulson, 'Fourteenth-century castles in context: apotheosis or decline?', in N. Saul (ed.) *Fourteenth-Century England I* (Woodbridge, 2000), pp. 133–51.
- M. Johnson, *Behind the Castle Gate: From Medieval to Renaissance* (Abingdon, 2002).
- P. Dixon and B. Lott, 'The courtyard and the tower: contexts and symbols in the development of the late medieval great house', *Journal of the British Archaeological Association* 146, pp. 93–101 (1993).
- P. A. Faulkner, 'Castle planning in the fourteenth century', *Archaeological Journal* 120 (1963), pp. 215–235.
- G. Fairclough, 'Meaningful constructions: spatial and functional analysis of medieval buildings', *Antiquity* 66 (1992), pp. 348–66.
- M. Girouard, *Robert Smythson and the Elizabethan Country House* (London, 1983).
- J. Goodall, 'Lulworth Castle, Dorset', *Country Life* 194 (2000), pp. 34–9.
- J. R. Mathieu, 'New methods on old castles: generating new ways of seeing', *Medieval Archaeology* 43 (1999), pp. 115–142.
- A. Saunders, *Fortress Britain* (Liphook, 1989).
- M. W. Thompson, *The Decline of the Castle* (Cambridge, 1987).

8. Castles of chivalry

Castles were potent icons of lordly status. Castles were not just expressions of military power but also of lifestyle, lineage and chivalric virtue. This is not only to be seen in castle architecture, but also in the depiction of castles in literature. A useful case study of cultural expression by castle-building are the castles erected by Edward I in north Wales. Often seen as the cutting edge of medieval 'military architecture', Edward's 'ring of stone' also embodied complex chivalric iconography.

Sample questions

- To what extent can Edward I's castles in North Wales be defined as 'castles of chivalry'?
- What characteristics do literary sources suggest can be found in the 'ideal castle'?

Introductory texts

W. R. J. Barron (ed.), *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (Manchester, 1974).

N. Coldstream, 'Architects, advisors and design at Edward I's castles in Wales', *Architectural History* 46 (2003), pp. 19–35.

J. R. Mathieu, 'New methods on old castles: generating new ways of seeing', *Medieval Archaeology* 43 (1999), pp. 115–142.

R. Morris, 'The architecture of Edwardian enthusiasm: castle symbolism in the reigns of Edward I and his successors', in M. J. Strickland (ed.), *Armies, Chivalry and Warfare in Medieval England and France* (Stamford, 1998), pp. 63–81.

O. J. Padel, 'Tintagel in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries', *Cornish Studies* 16 (1988), pp. 61–6.

J. Taylor, *The Welsh Castles of Edward I* (London, 1986).

M. W. Thompson, 'The Green Knight's castle', in C. Harper-Bill, C. Holdsworth and J. L. Nelson (eds.), *Studies in Medieval History Presented to R. Allen Brown* (Woodbridge, 1989), pp. 317–26.

A. Wheatley, *The Idea of the Castle in Medieval England* (Woodbridge, 2004).

M. A. Whitaker, 'Otherworld castles in middle English Arthurian romance', in K. Reyerson and F. Powe (eds.), *The Medieval Castle, Romance and Reality* (Iowa, 1984), pp. 27–46.

9. The castle in Scotland

A significant number of Britain's most famous castles are situated in Scotland, some of which played important roles in national politics. The castles of Scotland also underwent something of a Renaissance at the end of the Middle Ages: to what extent was Scotland different from elsewhere?

Sample questions

- Were Scottish castles more 'militarised' than their Irish, Welsh or English counterparts?
- What was the Scottish contribution to castle design in medieval Europe?
- To what extent were the changes in late medieval Scottish castles unique?

Introductory texts

S. Cruden, *The Scottish Castle* (London, 1960).

R. Fawcett, *Scottish Architecture: From the Accession of the Stewarts to the Reformation, 1371–1560* (Edinburgh, 1994).

D. MacGibbon and T. Ross, *The Castellated and Domestic Architecture of Scotland from the Twelfth to the Eighteenth Century*, 5 vols. (Edinburgh, 1887–92).

G. Stell, 'Kings, nobles and buildings of the later middle ages: Scotland', in G. G. Simpson (ed.), *Scotland and Scandinavia 800–1800* (Aberdeen, 1990).

G. Stell, 'The Scottish medieval castle: form, function and evolution', in K. J. Stringer (ed.), *Essays on the Nobility of Medieval Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1985), pp. 195–209.

G. Stell, 'Architecture: the changing needs of society', in J. M. Brown, *Scottish Society in the Fifteenth Century* (London, 1977), pp. 153–83.

C. Tabraham, *Scotland's Castles* (London, 1997).

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- P. Barker and R. Higham, *Timber Castles* (London, 1992).
- R. A. Brown, *English Castles*, 3rd edition (London, 1976).
- R. A. Brown, *The Archaeology of Castles: A Visual Guide* (New York, 1984).
- R. A. Brown, *Rochester Castle*, 2nd edition (London, 1986).
- G. T. Clark, *Mediaeval Military Architecture in England* 2 vols. (London, 1884).
- H. M. Colvin, R. Allen Brown & A. J. Taylor, *The History of the King's Works* (London, 1963–1982)
- C. Coulson, 'Structural Symbolism in Medieval Castle Architecture', *Journal of the British Archaeological Association* 132 (1979), pp. 73–90.
- C. Coulson, 'Some Analysis of Bodiam Castle, East Sussex', *Medieval Knighthood* 4 (1992), pp. 51–107.
- C. Coulson, 'Cultural Realities and Reappraisals in English Castle Study', *Journal of Medieval History* 22 (1996), pp. 171–208.
- C. Coulson, *Castles in Medieval Society* (Oxford, 2003).
- O. H. Creighton, *Castles and Landscapes* (London, 2002).
- B. K. Davison, 'The Origins of the Castle in England: the Institute's Research Project', *Archaeological Journal* 124 (1967), pp. 202–11.
- B. K. Davison 'Early Earthwork Castles: a New Model', *Château-Gaillard* 3 (1969), pp. 37–47.
- P. Dixon, 'The Myth of the Keep', in G. Meirion-Jones, E. Impey and M. Jones (eds.), *The Seigneurial Residence in Western Europe AD c. 800–1600* (BAR International Series 1088) (Oxford, 2002), pp. 9–13.
- P. Dixon and P. Marshall, 'The Great Tower at Hedingham Castle: A Reassessment', *Fortress* 18 (1993), pp. 16–23, reprinted in R. Liddiard (ed.) *Anglo-Norman Castles* (Woodbridge, 2003), pp. 297–306.
- P. A. Faulkner, 'Domestic Planning from the Twelfth to the Fourteenth Centuries', *Archaeological Journal* 115 (1958), pp. 150–183.
- P. A. Faulkner, 'Castle Planning in the Fourteenth Century', *Archaeological Journal* 120 (1963), pp. 215–235.
- A. Hamilton Thompson, *Military Archaeology in England during the Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1912).
- T. A. Heslop, 'Orford Castle: Nostalgia and Sophisticated Living', *Architectural History* 34 (1991), pp. 36–58.
- R. Higham and P. Barker, *Timber Castles* (London, 1992).

- M. Johnson, *Behind the Castle Gate: From Medieval to Renaissance* (London, 2002).
- J. R. Kenyon, *Medieval Fortifications* (Leicester, 1990).
- D. J. C. King, *Castellarium Anglicanum* (New York, 1983).
- D. J. C. King, *The Castle in England and Wales: An Interpretative History* (London, 1988).
- P. Marshall, 'The Great Tower as Residence', in G. Meirion-Jones, E. Impey and M. Jones (eds.), *The Seigneurial Residence in Western Europe AD c. 800–1600* (BAR International Series 1088) (Oxford, 2002), pp. 27–44.
- T. McNeill, *Castles* (London, 1992).
- C. Platt, *The Castle in Medieval England and Wales* (London, 1982).
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- M. Prestwich, *Armies and Warfare in the Middle Ages: The English Experience* (New Haven, 1996).
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- M. W. Thompson, *The Decline of the Castle* (Cambridge, 1987).
- M. W. Thompson, *The Rise of the Castle* (Cambridge, 1991).

Useful websites

The Castle Studies Group has an excellent website and anyone interested in castles is well advised to become a member: www.castlestudiesgroup.org.uk

Other useful websites include:

- www.castlewales.com/home.html
- www.rampantscotland.com/castles.htm
- www.casteland.com/indexuk.htm

National Heritage Agencies:

- www.englishheritage.org.uk
- www.historic-scotland.gov.uk
- www.cadw.wales.gov.uk
- www.heritageireland.ie
- www.ni-environment.gov.uk

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