

---

# A Study Of King Edward I Castle And How The Buildings Are Historically Significant

## The Cultural Significance of The Castles of King Edward I

Almost everyone wants power and control it doesn't matter what decade or even what century you live in, the people who run our governments whether it be a prince or a prime minister are power hungry, even now we have governments invading other countries, like Russia's Vladimir Putin trying to take "back" territories they believe to be theirs, like that of The Ukraine. This idea of territory as power didn't start recently either, in fact, King Edward I is no exception to these ideas of greed and power. He built castles as control centers throughout his territories. He also saw his expansion of the English territory as a necessary feat, building castles in strategic locals as centers of power, control, and protection throughout Wales for both military and cultural purposes. The "Iron Ring" encompassed many castles of great cultural significance, whether it be due to the city it protected and how it was won, the site of where the castle was built in the landscape, the money it cost, or the history behind it. King Edward I built castles throughout Wales to control the portions of land that he had already won during his conquest, starting at the end of his first military campaign and the signing of the Treaty of Aberconwy. Edward designed these castles in what is now called the "Iron Ring", a circle of castles built to control the uprisings of the Welsh rebellions. The first of these subsequent castles built was Flint Castle, soon followed by Rhuddlan, Aberystwyth, and Builth Wells as well as commandeering, rebuilding, and upgrading other Welsh castles within the area. After The Treaty of Rhuddlan was signed in 1284, forcefully crushing the resistance of the common Welsh, another three castles were built including that of Conwy which effectively replaced his father's stronghold at Deganwy, which was by then in disrepair, and that of Caernarfon Castle which was before then a center of power for the Welsh prince Llywelyn, and connected the Welsh peoples to their Roman background as it was the site of an important Roman fort called Segontium.

The conquest took two military campaigns to complete spanning roughly nineteen years, but is one of King Edward's biggest achievements during his time as King of England. "The princely dynasty of Gwynedd was destroyed, and the most remarkable chain of castles ever constructed stands as a permanent reminder of the power which Edward brought to bear on the Welsh." 1

The war and subsequent conquest of Wales was partially because of the stubbornness of Llywelyn ap Gruffydd, the then prince of Wales. He utterly refused time and again to perform homage to King Edward I, this was seen as a large insult especially after he had done so to Edward's father, Henry III. The issue first appeared after the death of Henry when the Welsh

---

### Need help with the assignment?

Our professionals are ready to assist with any writing!

**GET HELP**

---

prince failed to respond to a summons from the new king, and even failed to attend King Edward's coronation, following this several more summons were rebuffed by Prince Llywelyn. "Llywelyn steadfastly refused to attend, and the sums due under the terms of the Treaty of Montgomery remained unpaid."<sup>2</sup> Edward saw this as unacceptable, as he considered the question of Llywelyn's fealty non-negotiable, and that it was his duty as to appear before him, and if he would continue to refuse to adhere to these terms then "he would be treated as a rebel."<sup>3</sup> The formal decision to declare war upon Wales was made on November 12th, 1276.

Troops were mustered up in the Summer of 1277, as it was imperative to to make arrangements for any defence of English Territory once the war was declared. The formal feudal summonses were sent on December 12th, 1276, asking for everyone who owed the King their service to converge in Worcester on July 1st.<sup>4</sup> The army advanced quickly and easily from Chester to Flint by the end of their first month. "Edward himself then returned to Cheshire, to supervise the collection of supplies and equipment needed to set up a strong base."<sup>5</sup> King Edward then returned to Flint and began the work of the military fortress that would become Flint Castle, by building a new road and a giant ditch around the city. King Edward's army advanced from Flint to Rhuddlan and eventually onto Deganwy and then into Anglesey. In Anglesey a large group of three hundred and sixty farmers were taken away, and thus the English applied pressure to the Welsh by intimidating them with the prospect of eventual starvation.<sup>6</sup> By September King Edward and his army had withdrawn back to Rhuddlan, and by the end of November a treaty had been signed further humiliating Llywelyn, but allowing him to keep his territory uncaptured by the English if he renounced his claim to the lands the English had already taken, other than Anglesey.<sup>7</sup> He was to swear his fealty to Edward at Rhuddlan, then go to London to do his homage, pay a fine of 50,000 pounds, and release ten hostages to entrust that the treaty would be sustained.<sup>8</sup>

Following the signing of the Treaty of Aberconwy the construction began on a series of Welsh castles, "Aberystwyth and Builth from the South, Flint and Rhuddlan from the North-East"<sup>9</sup> , along the border of the English territory designed specifically to corner the Welsh in. Flint was the site of the first of the castles to be built in what is now known as the "Iron Ring". Flint was the first to hold a castle as it was Edward's first captured territory in Wales during his first Military campaign against Llywelyn, and due to it's strategic location as it was only a one day's journey from Chester, and it was right next to the River Dee. Flint is unique because it wasn't the only thing being built, but also the entire town making it into a Bastide, a type of fortified city with a wall.<sup>10</sup> Edward was introduced to the idea of the Bastide during his expeditions in Gascony, he later applied this idea to many of his castles in Wales. Fortified cities such as this were used as powerful administrative centers for King Edward as he would receive money and was assured control over the citizens.<sup>11</sup> Bastides were often towns built in open country for economic purposes, such as diverting people from one town to another by road travel, to set up new churches, or to establish new market places. Creating bastides was almost always

---

## Need help with the assignment?

Our professionals are ready to assist with any writing!

**GET HELP**

---

beneficial for all parties involved such as the King, the proprietor of the land, and even the villagers. There were Bastides in Flint, Conwy, and Caernarfon they all worked as administrative centers in King Edward's plan for control and for an abiding English settlement.<sup>12</sup>

In fortified ways such as these access to Flint Castle would only be granted by a drawbridge due to the river rising almost to the base on the North and East sides, and a moat that was dug around its South wall and largest tower, located in its South-East corner.<sup>13</sup> Flint Castle is thought to be modeled after several possible French Castles King Edward I might have passed on his way to participate in the Eighth Crusade in 1270. The rooms were small with thick walls of twenty three feet at the base, to sixteen feet above, and the ground floor was vaulted all the way around the interior of the keep. Flint has a smaller square design, with round angle towers on all corners, except for the South-East, which was a much larger tower serving as both a corner tower and a donjon. This tower or keep was separated from the castle and had its own stone wall and trench. "...it consists of a series of levels of galleries running around a central open area. Situated on levels above the basement (which probably stored military supplies), each gallery contained several rooms, side by side around the open cylinder, including residential chambers, latrines, the kitchen (probably adjacent to the well), and a chapel. It is likely that these chambers were used either by the castle's constable, or by individuals of high rank...".<sup>14</sup> The lavishness of Flint Castle, and specifically this tower, made it an appealing place for high ranking officials and visiting dignitaries to stay, elevating Flint Castle and subsequently the town of Flint to a much higher status. As having people such as the Justice of Chester, or any of the other well-known English officials who stayed there, for any period of time would have been a big deal to the citizens of the town, as it made them culturally significant to other surrounding cities. All these things making Flint a one of a kind to the Castles of Northern Wales. This grand castle and Bastide at Flint is set in a place that cloaks its true strength, due to its unique ability to disappear into its marshy like surroundings.

The next new castle to be built in the North-East at this time was Rhuddlan. Rhuddlan was concentric in design, meaning it consisted of two different rings of walls, or wards, one inside of the other.<sup>15</sup> It was designed to be a kind of castle inside of another castle, that way when they were attacked there would be two different barriers in the way of the army attempting to take the castle. The inner ward was a diamond, or trapezoidal in shape, very thick and very heavily defended, the outer ward which was thinner and farther out surrounding the whole complex, and a curtain wall, going around the outer wall, with small towers and turrets around it. Twin towers at the two corners form the gatehouses into the castle. The outer ward was overlooking the moat on all but the West side, where it overlooked the River Clwyd, with only a small part of the South-West section of the castle most likely used as a dock area with an overlooking tower, and a short section of North-West on land as a gate. Entrance to the castle could also be achieved from the river on the west.<sup>16</sup> The inner wall or ward has a singular tower on each of the sharper angles in the north and south, and a gatehouse with a double tower on each of the blunter ones

---

## Need help with the assignment?

Our professionals are ready to assist with any writing!

**GET HELP**

---

in the east and west. Various buildings were built in the inner ward such as a chapel, great hall, kitchens, and apartments, while the outer ward housed the granary, a blacksmith, a goldsmith, the treasury, and the stables. Edward built the new city accompanying this castle to the North away from the Norman settlement. Its defences consisted of a pair of banks with a ditch between and a new bridge, a stone wall was never erected and was most likely not intended.<sup>17</sup> Rhuddlan castle was historically a defensive site for the Welsh that was taken by the King in the first military campaign, and he set up his main base there in August of 1277 in the remains of the old castle. Rhuddlan housed the important event that ended that first campaign by Edward forcing Llywelyn to swear his fealty to him. Rhuddlan was a historically significant place for this reason, as well as the Statute of Rhuddlan that was enacted there giving the English the power to rule of the Welsh.<sup>18</sup>

War broke out again in 1282, due to Llywelyn's brother, Dafydd who launched attacks against many English settlements with the help of other Welsh rulers throughout the country. Edward took this as another chance to seize Welsh territory for himself.<sup>19</sup> Dafydd first attacked Hawarden Castle and other various sites such as Flint, at this Edward retaliated with a large army swiftly moving into Northern Wales. In the early part of the war the Welsh obtained many victories defeating both the Earl of Gloucester and Roger Mortimer. However things took a turn for them at the Battle of Orewin Bridge. The Welsh on their way to Blith in middle wales were tricked into a trap, Llywelyn was caught in the battle and killed. Edward bolstered by this great victory raised a new army and entered into Snowdonia in January of 1283. The Army quickly moved into the territory taking Dolwyddelan Castle, the center of the Welsh Rebellion, from the North and advancing into Meirionnydd from the South. The completion of the rebellions came in the summer of 1283, with the capture of Dafydd. Dafydd was then taken to Shrewsbury and relieved of his head, as all traitors must by law. The Statute of Rhuddlan was enacted in 1284 giving the Crown a way of governing the new territories of Wales.<sup>20</sup>

Conwy Castle was one of the castles built in these new territories. It is one of the biggest and most lavish castles was built in the aftermath of the second military campaign, that of Conwy and it's Bastide. Conwy castle is different from the others due to it's size and design. Building began in 1283 by digging a massive ditch around the entire base of what would become the castle. The castle was built in a rectangular plan with inner and outer wards that were sharply divided by a cross wall, with four large towers on either ward. The entrances are protected by barbicans, with no real gatehouse of any kind.<sup>21</sup> The castle at Conwy is surrounded by a Bastide and the shore line, making it a formidable site. "At Conway Edward built one of the finest of all medieval walled towns in conjunction with the castle."<sup>22</sup> Conwy was such a great scale, one that had not previously been seen in Wales, that it put the Welsh in check, making them understand the English's superior power and strength. Conwy castle was important to the culture of the surrounding areas because of this strength and the vast size of the castle, it suppressed the rebellions of the Welsh people, and because of this protecting it's people within

---

## Need help with the assignment?

Our professionals are ready to assist with any writing!

**GET HELP**

---

the walled fortress. The fortress of the city and its castle even stood against the Welsh army in the 1294 Rebellions when Edward was besieged there for two months from December to February, when forces came to relieve him.<sup>23</sup>

The most culturally significant castle Edward built stood at Caernarfon. The town of Caernarfon started long before the castle foundation was ever even laid, as a small Roman settlement called Segontium. Segontium changed hands many times over the next several hundred years eventually falling to the Normans for a short time during the 11th century, but overall remaining an independent Welsh territory until the fall of the Welsh prince in 1284 and establishment of the borough of Caernarfonshire and became the English Royal seat of power in Wales.<sup>25</sup> Edward chose to locate his center of power in Caernarfon for many reasons but I think the biggest reason for him to choose Caernarfon was because of its history. Placing his royal place in the remains of the original Roman fort linked him to the past of the Welsh country and gave him a sense of being a Roman descendant. The idea of Rome was a big deal as it put you in a higher standing culturally, because of the over glorification of the ideals of Rome at the time. The walls of the castle and town were even modelled after those in Constantinople.<sup>26</sup> The construction of Caernarfon Castle also cost the most of any other castle built in the "Iron Ring" coming in somewhere between 20,000 and 25,000 pounds, where the next closest is Conwy Castle coming in at 15,000 pounds. The Castle was constructed between 1284 and 1330 bringing in large amounts of masons and builders through the years. The castle was partially burned along with the city walls in the 1294 Rebellions leading to a second set of construction to repair them. The massive size and grandeur of the Castle led to the significance of it in later years. "The King's Gate was never fully completed, but was immensely strong - it was twin towered, and had been intended to have a drawbridge, five doors, six portcullises, and a right angled turn, rendering attackers' shields useless as they turned the corner, from the main gatehouse into a smaller ward over a second drawbridge."<sup>27</sup> It was the style of construction and the size that drew many high brow guests to this castle, leading to its lavish style and decoration through the years. Ultimately the palace became the birthplace of the eventual King Edward II or Edward of Caernarfon, as he was known then, the prince of Wales and it also became his seat of power.

King Edward I saw the expansion of the English territory as a necessary achievement, a way of cementing his name in history as the first English King to take Wales. He built castles in strategic locals as centers of power, control, and protection throughout Wales for both military and cultural purposes. The "Iron Ring" encircled many castles of great cultural significance, whether it be due to the city it protected and how it was won, the site of where the castle was built in the landscape, the money it cost, or even the history behind it. King Edward I built castles throughout Wales to control the portions of land that he won during his invasion, starting at the end of his first military campaign and the signing of the Treaty of Aberconwy. The first Castle to be built was at Flint, a smaller but significant Castle. The beauty and extravagance of

---

## Need help with the assignment?

Our professionals are ready to assist with any writing!

**GET HELP**

---

Flint made it an appealing place for high ranking officials and visiting dignitaries to stay, elevating Flint Castle and subsequently the town of Flint to a much higher status. Rhuddlan was different in regard that it was its beauty or the people who stayed there that made it a place of culture, but the events that transpired there such as Llywelyn swearing his fealty or the Statute of Rhuddlan. Conwy Castle made its mark in the eye of the Welsh people due to its great size and military strength, and its ability to suppress rebellions. The crowning jewel of the English Castles known as the "Iron Ring" is definitely Caernarfon Castle, which was built at the former site of the Roman settlement of Segontium. Edward chose to locate his center of power in Caernarfon for many reasons but I think the biggest reason for him to choose Caernarfon where because of this history, he even designed parts of the Castle after things in Constantinople. It even became the seat of power for the eventual Prince of Wales who would become Edward II. Grandeur and the idea of territory as power and wealth were anything but foreign concepts to the English throne and specifically King Edward I. He was power hungry and greedy to make his mark on history by taking over the Welsh territory. He was really no different in this way than any other political leader either at that time or now.

gradesfixer.com

---

## Need help with the assignment?

Our professionals are ready to assist with any writing!

[GET HELP](#)