

= Conwy Castle =

Conwy Castle ( Welsh : Castell Conwy , English : Conway Castle ) is a medieval fortification in Conwy , on the north coast of Wales . It was built by Edward I , during his conquest of Wales , between 1283 and 1289 . Constructed as part of a wider project to create the walled town of Conwy , the combined defences cost around £ 15 @, @ 000 , a huge sum for the period . Over the next few centuries , the castle played an important part in several wars . It withstood the siege of Madog ap Llywelyn in the winter of 1294 ? 95 , acted as a temporary haven for Richard II in 1399 and was held for several months by forces loyal to Owain Glyndŵr in 1401 .

Following the outbreak of the English Civil War in 1642 , the castle was held by forces loyal to Charles I , holding out until 1646 when it surrendered to the Parliamentary armies . In the aftermath the castle was partially slighted by Parliament to prevent it being used in any further revolt , and was finally completely ruined in 1665 when its remaining iron and lead was stripped and sold off . Conwy Castle became an attractive destination for painters in the late 18th and early 19th centuries . Visitor numbers grew and initial restoration work was carried out in the second half of the 19th century . In the 21st century the ruined castle is managed by Cadw as a tourist attraction .

UNESCO considers Conwy to be one of " the finest examples of late 13th century and early 14th century military architecture in Europe " , and it is classed as a World Heritage site . The rectangular castle is built from local and imported stone and occupies a coastal ridge , originally overlooking an important crossing point over the River Conwy . Divided into an Inner and an Outer Ward , it is defended by eight large towers and two barbicans , with a postern gate leading down to the river , allowing the castle to be resupplied from the sea . It retains the earliest surviving stone machicolations in Britain and what historian Jeremy Ashbee has described as the " best preserved suite of medieval private royal chambers in England and Wales " . In keeping with other Edwardian castles in North Wales , the architecture of Conwy has close links to that found in the kingdom of Savoy during the same period , an influence probably derived from the Savoy origins of the main architect , James of Saint George .

= = History = =

= = = 13th century = = =

Before the English built the town of Conwy , Aberconwy Abbey , the site was occupied by a Cistercian monastery favoured by the Welsh princes . The location also controlled an important crossing point over the River Conwy between the coastal and inland areas of North Wales , that Deganwy Castle for many years had defended . The kings of England and the Welsh princes had vied for control of the region since the 1070s and the conflict had resumed during the 13th century , leading to Edward I intervening in North Wales for the second time during his reign in 1282 .

Edward invaded with a huge army , pushing north from Carmarthen and westwards from Montgomery and Chester . Edward captured Aberconwy in March 1283 and decided that the location would form the centre of a new county : he would relocate the abbey eight miles up the Conwy valley to a new site at Maenan , establishing Maenan Abbey , and build a new English castle and walled town on the monastery 's former site . The ruined castle of Deganwy was abandoned and never rebuilt . Edward 's plan was a colonial enterprise and placing the new town and walls on top of such a high @-@ status native Welsh site was in part a symbolic act to demonstrate English power .

Work began on cutting the ditch around Conwy Castle within days of Edward 's decision . The work was controlled by Sir John Bonvillars and overseen by master mason James of St. George , and the first phase of work between 1283 and 1284 focused on creating the exterior curtain walls and towers . In the second phase , from 1284 and 1286 , the interior buildings were erected , while work began on the walls for the neighbouring town . By 1287 , the castle was complete . The builders recruited huge numbers of labourers from across England for the task . At each summer building season the

labourers massed at Chester and then walked into Wales . Edward 's accountants did not separate the costs of the town walls from that of the castle , but the total cost of the two projects came to around £ 15 @, @ 000 , a huge sum for the period .

The castle 's constable was , by a royal charter of 1284 , also the mayor of the new town of Conwy , and oversaw a castle garrison of 30 soldiers , including 15 crossbowmen , supported by a carpenter , chaplain , blacksmith , engineer and a stonemason . In 1294 Madog ap Llywelyn rebelled against English rule . Edward was besieged at Conwy by the Welsh between December and January 1295 , supplied only by sea , before forces arrived to relieve him in February . Chronicler Walter of Guisborough suggested that given the austere conditions Edward refused to drink his own private supply of wine , and instead had it shared out amongst the garrison . For some years afterwards , the castle formed the main residence for visiting senior figures , and hosted Edward 's son , the future Edward II in 1301 when he visited the region to receive homage from the Welsh leaders .

= = = 14th ? 15th centuries = = =

Conwy Castle was not well maintained during the early 14th century and by 1321 a survey reported it was poorly equipped , with limited stores and suffering from leaking roofs and rotten timbers . These problems persisted until Edward , the Black Prince took over control of the castle in 1343 . Sir John Weston , his chamberlain , conducted repairs , building new stone support arches for the great hall and other parts of the castle . After the death of the Black Prince , however , Conwy fell into neglect again .

At the end of the 14th century , the castle was used as a refuge by Richard II from the forces of his rival , Henry Bolingbroke . On 12 August 1399 , after returning from Ireland , Richard made his way to the castle where he met Bolingbroke 's emissary , Henry Percy , for negotiations . Percy swore in the chapel he would not harm the king . On 19 August , Richard surrendered to Percy at Flint Castle , promising to abdicate if his life were spared . The king was then taken to London , he died later in captivity at Pontefract Castle .

Henry Bolingbroke took the English throne to rule as Henry IV in 1400 , but rebellion broke out in North Wales shortly afterwards under the leadership of Owain Glyndŵr . In March 1401 , Rhys ap Tudur and his brother Gwilym , cousins of Owain Glyndŵr , undertook a surprise attack on Conwy Castle . Pretending to be carpenters repairing the castle , the two gained entry , killed the two watchmen on duty and took control of the fortress . Welsh rebels then attacked and captured the rest of the walled town . The brothers held out for around three months , before negotiating a surrender ; as part of this agreement the pair were given a royal pardon by Henry .

During the War of the Roses between 1455 and 1485 , fought by the rival factions of the Lancastrians and the Yorkists , Conwy was reinforced , but played little part in the fighting . Henry VIII conducted restoration work in the 1520s and 1530s , during which time the castle was being used as a prison , a depot and as a potential residence for visitors .

= = = 17th ? 21st centuries = = =

Conwy Castle fell into disrepair again by the early 17th century . Charles I sold it to Edward Conway in 1627 for £ 100 , and Edward 's son , also called Edward , inherited the ruin in 1631 . In 1642 the English Civil War broke out between the Charles ' royalist supporters and Parliament . John Williams , the Archbishop of York , took charge of the castle on behalf of the king , and set about repairing and garrisoning it at his own expense . In 1645 , Sir John Owen was appointed governor of the castle instead , however , leading to a bitter dispute between the two men . The Archbishop defected to Parliament , the town of Conwy fell in August 1646 and in November General Thomas Mytton finally took the castle itself after a substantial siege .

In the aftermath of the siege , Colonel John Carter was appointed governor of the castle and fresh repairs were carried out . In 1655 the Council of State appointed by Parliament ordered the castle to be slighted , or put beyond military use : the Bakehouse tower was probably deliberately partially pulled down at this time as part of the slighting . With the restoration of Charles II in 1660 , Conway

was returned to Edward Conway , the Earl of Conway , but five years later Edward decided to strip the remaining iron and lead from the castle and sell it off . The work was completed under the supervision of Edward Conway 's overseer William Milward , despite opposition from the leading citizens of Conwy , and turned the castle into a total ruin .

By the end of the 18th century , the ruins were considered picturesque and sublime , attracting visitors and artists , and paintings of the castle were made by Thomas Girtin , Moses Griffith , Julius Caesar Ibbetson , Paul Sandby and J. M. W. Turner . Several bridges were built across the River Conwy linking the town and Llandudno during the 19th century , including a road bridge in 1826 and a rail bridge in 1848 . These improved communication links with the castle and further increased tourist numbers . In 1865 Conwy Castle passed from the Holland family , who had leased it from the descendants of the Conways , to the civic leadership of Conwy town . Restoration work on the ruins then began , including the reconstruction of the damaged Bakehouse tower . In 1953 the castle was leased to the Ministry of Works and Arnold Taylor undertook a wide range of repairs and extensive research into the castle 's history . An additional road bridge was built to the castle in 1958 . Already protected as a scheduled monument , in 1986 it was also declared part of the World Heritage Site of the " Castles and Town Walls of King Edward in Gwynedd " .

In the 21st century the castle is managed by Cadw as a tourist attraction and 186 @, @ 897 tourists visited the castle in 2010 ; a new visitor centre was opened in 2012 . The castle requires ongoing maintenance and repairs cost £ 30 @, @ 000 over the 2002 ? 03 financial year .

= = Architecture = =

UNESCO considers Conwy Castle one of " the finest examples of late 13th century and early 14th century military architecture in Europe " . It hugs a rocky coastal ridge of grey sand- and limestone , and much of the stone from the castle is largely taken from the ridge itself , probably when the site was first cleared . The local stone was not of sufficient quality to be used for carving details such as windows , however , and accordingly sandstone was brought in from the Creuddyn peninsula , Chester and the Wirral . This sandstone was more colourful than the local grey stone , and was probably deliberately chosen for its appearance .

The castle has a rectangular plan and is divided into an Inner and Outer Ward , separated by a cross @-@ wall , with four large , 70 @-@ foot ( 21 m ) tall towers on each side ; originally the castle would have been white @-@ washed using a lime render . The outside of the towers still have the putlog holes from their original construction , where timbers were inserted to create a spiralling ramp for the builders . Although now somewhat decayed , the battlements originally sported triple finial designs and featured a sequence of square holes running along the outside of the walls . It is uncertain what these holes were used for ? they may have been drainage holes , supports for defensive hoarding or for displaying ornamental shields .

The main entrance to the castle is through the western barbican , an exterior defence in front of the main gate . When first built , the barbican was reached over a drawbridge and a masonry ramp that came up sharply from the town below ; the modern path cuts east along the outside of the walls . The barbican features the earliest surviving stone machicolations in Britain , and the gate would originally have been protected by a portcullis .

The gate leads through to the Outer Ward which , when first built , would have been full of various administrative and service buildings . The north @-@ west tower was reached through the porter 's lodge and contained limited accommodation and space for stores . The south @-@ west tower may have been used either by the castle 's constable , or by the castle 's garrison , and also contained a bakehouse . On the south side of the ward is a range of buildings that included the great hall and chapel , sitting on top of the cellars , which are now exposed . The stubs and one surviving stone arches from the 1340s can still be seen . Behind the great hall was the tower used by the constable for detaining prisoners ; this included a special room for holding prisoners , called the " debtors chambre " ( " debtors ' chamber " ) in the 16th century , and an underground dungeon . On the north side of the ward was a range of service buildings , including a kitchen , brewhouse and bakehouse , backed onto by the kitchen tower , containing accommodation and store rooms .

The Inner Ward was originally separated from the Outer Ward by an internal wall , a drawbridge and a gate , protected by a ditch cut into the rock . The ditch was filled in during the 16th century and the drawbridge removed . The spring @-@ fed castle well built alongside the gate survives , and today is 91 @-@ foot ( 28 m ) deep . Inside , the ward contained the chambers for the royal household , their immediate staff and service facilities ; today , historian Jeremy Ashbee considers them to be the " best preserved suite of medieval private royal chambers in England and Wales " . They were designed to form a royal palace in miniature , that could , if necessary , be sealed off from the rest of castle and supplied from the eastern gate by sea almost indefinitely , although in practice they were rarely used by the royal family .

The royal rooms were positioned on the first floor of a range of buildings that ran around the outside of the ward , facing onto a courtyard . The four towers that protected the Inner Ward contained service facilities , with the Chapel Tower containing the private royal chapel . Each tower has an additional watchtower turret , probably intended both for security and to allow the prominent display of the royal flag . The arrangement was originally similar to that of the 13th century Gloriette at Corfe Castle , and provided a combination of privacy for the king while providing extensive personal security . The two sets of apartments were later unified into a single set of rooms , including a great chamber , outer chamber and inner chamber .

On the east side of the Inner Ward is another barbican , enclosing the castle garden . This was overlooked by the royal apartments , and changed in style over the years : in the early 14th century there was a lawn , in the late 14th century vines , in the 16th century crab @-@ apple trees and a lawn and in the 17th century formal ornamental flowers . A postern gate originally led down to the river where a small dock was built , allowing key visitors to enter the castle in private and for the fortress to be resupplied by boat , although this gate is now concealed by the later bridges built on the site .

The architecture of Conwy has close links to that found in the kingdom of Savoy in the same period . These include window styles , the type of crenellation used on the towers and positioning of putlog holes , and are usually ascribed to the influence of the Savoy architect Master James . The links between Conwy and Savoy are not straightforward , however , as in some cases the relevant Savoy structures were built after James had left the region . The similarity in architectural details may , therefore , be the result of the wider role played by Savoy craftsmen and engineers on the Conwy project .