

= Worcester city walls =

Worcester 's city walls are a sequence of defensive structures built around the city of Worcester in England between the 1st and 17th centuries . The first walls to be built around Worcester were constructed by the Romans . These early walls lasted beyond the fall of the Empire , and the defences encouraged several early Christian foundations to establish themselves in Worcester during the troubled 6th and 7th centuries . The Anglo @-@ Saxons expanded Worcester in the 890s , forming a new walled , planned city , called a burh . The burh utilised the southern stretches of the old Roman walls , but pushed further north to enclose a much larger area . The Anglo @-@ Saxon city walls were maintained by a share of taxes on a local market and streets , in an agreement reinforced by a royal charter .

After the Norman conquest of England in the 11th century a motte and bailey castle was constructed on the south side of the city , but the Norman rulers continued to use the older burh walls , despite the city having expanded beyond these defences in the north and south @-@ east . During the years of the Anarchy in the 1140s , Worcester was successfully attacked several times ; after the war a new city wall was built to improve the city 's defences . The new walls , completed by the early 13th century , were constructed of stone and had three main gates . They were maintained in good condition into the 17th century .

During the English Civil War in the 1640s the old medieval walls were reinforced with modern earthwork bastions and an outlying fort , called a sconce . Worcester changed hands several times during the conflict , and after the war ended the newer fortifications were dismantled . During the 18th century the older medieval stone walls and gatehouses were sold and mostly destroyed : by the 20th century , few parts survived . Post @-@ war archaeology in the 1950s and 1960s and construction work in the 1970s revealed previously hidden stretches of the wall , and in the 21st century plans have been drawn up to improve the conservation and maintenance of this historic monument .

= = History = =

= = = 1st ? 7th centuries = = =

The first defensive walls at Worcester were built after the Roman conquest of Britain in AD 43 . Although a settlement existed on the site during the Iron Age , there is no evidence that walls were ever built around it . The Roman town was probably preceded by the construction a Roman fort , both located on the south side of the modern city and protected by the River Severn to the west . There are relatively few historical details or archaeological evidence from this period , but archaeological investigations of the Roman town walls suggest that it had wooden ramparts and was protected by an 89 @-@ foot (27 m) wide ditch . As with other Roman towns , the walls would have enclosed a rectangular town , protecting a settlement with a grid @-@ like network of streets .

The decline of the Roman Empire brought an end to Roman rule in Britain by the start of the 5th century . The town within the old Roman walls at Worcester continued to be occupied however , remaining a prominent military feature . New Christian religious foundations were established at Worcester during this period , attracted there in large part by the security the Roman defences offered during a troubled period . In the 7th century , Worcester Cathedral was built , once again within the old Roman walls .

= = = 8th ? 11th centuries = = =

During the Anglo @-@ Saxon period , Worcester first became the capital of the Hwicce kingdom , and later formed part of the wider kingdom of Mercia . Worcester and its defences were reorganised by Ealdorman Æthelred and Æthelflæd and bishop Werferth in the 890s . This involved creating a burh , a fortified Anglo @-@ Saxon town ; in Worcester this took the form of a planned settlement ,

extending out from the old Roman defences , with the Shambles forming a street running along the wall on the east . Archaeological evidence suggests that the burh had 4 @, @ 650 feet (1 @, @ 417 m) of walls in total ; documentary evidence from the Burghal Hidage document , written shortly after the creation of the walls , suggests they were 4 @, @ 960 feet (1 @, @ 512 m) long , a discrepancy that may be accounted for by changes in the course of the river since the 10th century . The walls incorporated the old Roman fortifications on the south and south @-@ east side of the city and appear to have included a defensive ditch , with a revetment supporting a wooden palisade .

The creation of the burh walls is recorded in a charter witnessed by King Alfred , which lays out the responsibilities of the various churchmen and nobles involved , and notes that the upkeep of the walls would be paid for out of a share of taxes on a new market and on the new streets . The local lords took responsibility for building the burh wall , which unusually for the period was not built on royal lands . During the 10th century , the documents on the burh suggest that the aristocratic thegns living around Worcester also owned and maintained buildings within the walls ; Creighton and Higham suggest that these may have been linked to their responsibilities for defending the settlement .

During the 10th and 11th centuries Worcester spread north beyond the original burh walls , and south @-@ east to form Sidbury . In 1041 Worcester was attacked by the royal army of Harthacnut over a tax @-@ dispute that had led to the death of two of the king 's men ; despite the defensive walls , the city was successfully taken and burnt .

= = = 11th ? 16th centuries = = =

In 1066 William the Conqueror defeated the English army at the battle of Hastings and Norman forces advanced west into Worcestershire . To reinforce their occupation , the Normans built a motte and bailey castle on the south side of the city , taking advantage of the shape of the existing burh walls . The remaining burh walls continued to be used into the Norman period , but the city had already spread beyond them , reducing their effectiveness .

In the late 1130s a period of civil war broke out in England , called the Anarchy , in which the rival factions of King Stephen and the Empress Matilda contested the kingdom ? Worcestershire proved to be a key battleground in the war . The first attack on Worcester itself occurred in late 1139 when an Angevin army from Gloucestershire assaulted the city . After an attempt to take the castle on the south side of the city , the Gloucester forces entered from the north , looting and burning . Worcester became a base for Stephen 's forces for a period , before joining the Empress 's faction . In response , Stephen first stormed and burnt the city in 1148 , and then attacked it again in 1150 , shortly before the end of the conflict . From the accounts of these sieges , it appears that Worcester still lacked substantial walls during this period .

During the second half of the 12th century a new city wall began to be built around Worcester , with work probably continuing until early the next century . Enclosing about 85 acres (34 @. @ 4 hectares) , its design tracked the flow of natural streams to the north and east , and made use of the castle in the south as part of the defences . The walls were constructed of sandstone , and appear to have been surrounded by a flat bottomed , water @-@ filled ditch , more than 30 feet (9 m) wide . The new walls cut across existing parts of the city and would have required the demolition of numerous existing buildings that lay in their way ; the new defences also cut off the outlying districts of Sidbury , Lowesmoore , Foregate Street and The Tything from the inside of the walled city . Three main gates were built in the walls ? North Gate , St Martin 's Gate and Sidbury Gate ? protected by gatehouses of paired circular towers and arrowslits for use by crossbowmen . Smaller gates were built between them , such as Friar 's Gate .

Civil war broke out again in England in 1215 between forces loyal to King John and rebel barons , supported in due course by Prince Louis of France , in what has become known as the First Barons ' War . Worcester sided with the rebels , and in July 1216 the city was attacked by forces under the command of Ranulf , the Earl of Chester . Ranulf attempted to storm the castle , rather than the north side of the city , and after he eventually gained access a £ 100 fine was imposed on the city with the threat that their walls would be destroyed if the money was not paid . Although Worcester 's

walls clearly played a military role during this period , they would also have been symbolically important to the city and have played a part in controlling civic access and enforcing the city 's laws .

One method of paying for the construction and maintenance of city walls was a tax called murage , usually levied by permission of the king on particular goods being imported into a city . In Worcester , murage was raised to support work on the walls during three main phases , 1224 to 1239 , 1252 to 1310 and 1364 to 1411 . Worcester was attacked again during the Second Barons ' War in the 1260s , and the records suggest that some of the murage payments were used to repair damage caused by that attack . In the late 14th century a watergate was built in the western walls of the city , close to a slipway for launching boats . Worcester 's last murage grant occurred in 1439 , although in 1459 Henry VI allowed the city to use stones from the castle to repair the walls to defend the city in anticipation of a Yorkist attack during the Wars of the Roses . As in many other English towns and cities , as the medieval period progressed , housing began to encroach on the city walls in Worcester .

= = = 17th ? 19th centuries = = =

At the start of the 17th century , Worcester 's city walls were still intact , and were recorded in John Speed 's famous 1610 map of the city . In 1642 the English Civil War broke out between followers of King Charles I and Parliament . Worcester began the war under Royalist control , before rapidly being taken by Parliament and then changing hands again in 1643 following the battle of Edgehill . Worcester remained Royalist for the rest of the war until it was once again besieged and finally surrendered in 1646 .

The war was the first prolonged conflict in Britain to involve the use of artillery and gunpowder . Sieges became a prominent part of the war with over 300 occurring during the period . Worcester was once again a strategically important region in the war , and walled towns and cities like Worcester that could be defended against passing armies were particularly significant from a military perspective . By the 1640s the design of military fortifications had progressed significantly on the continent , owing largely to the Thirty Years War ; while older medieval stone walls still had military utility , they typically needed reinforcement with more modern earthworks to be truly effective . These new ideas were applied to city defences in England . In some cases a circuit of forts was built around a city ; in other cases , an entirely new city wall comprising modern bastions would be built . At Worcester , the unimproved walls were considered to be indefensible at the start of the war in 1642 , and the chosen solution was to directly reinforce the existing medieval wall with new earthworks .

To form these new defences , the buildings outside the old city walls were cleared and six large bastions were attached to them along the north and east sides of the city , while a sconce , Fort Royal Hill was built outside Sidbury Gate in the south , linked to the walls by a walkway . The ditch protecting the new earthworks was relatively shallow at about eight feet (2 @. @ 4 m) deep , but when combined with the high ramparts of the bastions , which were probably protected by sharpened stakes and a banquette firing platform , the bastions would have been well defended . The reinforced walls were manned in 1642 by soldiers employed by the Robert Devereux , the Earl of Essex . Prince Maurice subsequently conscripted the adult men and women of Worcester to work on the walls , threatening the death penalty if they did not attend . During the 1643 and 1646 sieges the reinforced defences were able to withstand the artillery bombardments ? the surrender in 1646 was mainly the result of a shortage of food and the collapse of the wider Royalist position across the south @-@ west of England .

Following further fighting between 1648 and 1649 , the Third English Civil War broke out in 1651 . Royalist forces under the command of Charles II advanced as far as Worcester , where the army paused to reinforce the walls further and await reinforcements in relative safety . The Parliamentary forces under Oliver Cromwell attacked in early September ; the ensuing battle of Worcester saw the Royalist forces pushed steadily back into the city . Fort Royal was successfully stormed and its guns turned on the city itself . Cromwell 's men began forcing their way into the city from west , south and

east and by the evening the city had fallen . The collapse marked the end of the Third Civil War . In the aftermath the bastions and other fortifications were mostly destroyed by Parliament , although the medieval walls and gates were spared .

By the 18th century local residents had built summer houses on top of the walls , which were still largely intact . During the next hundred years city and town walls across England began to be demolished to make way for new developments , and Worcester proved no exception . By the end of the century the walls and gates were being sold off and destroyed ; Friar 's Gate was probably the last to be demolished , early in the 19th century . Only a few tracts of wall survived , often concealed behind other buildings and new constructions .

= = Today = =

The remains of Worcester 's city walls were largely ignored until after the Second World War ; limited archaeological excavations first began in 1957 . Work continued in the 1960s and picked up pace in the 1970s , when the creation of the City Walls Road in Worcester uncovered more parts of the wall , formerly hidden from view . The Civil War earthworks of Fort Royal Hill are still visible overlooking the city .

As a result of their mixed history , the remains of the walls are owned by various different organisations and subject to different legal protection . Some parts of the walls are protected as Grade II listed buildings and scheduled monuments , although most of the walls lack this legal recognition . The multiple ownership of the different parts of the city walls contributed to what English Heritage considered an " uncoordinated " approach to their conservation . In response , a conservation plan has been created by Worcester City Council , proposing that the walls , despite their mixed ownership , should be managed as a single historic monument , and advising that some sections be repaired urgently ; as of 2010 this plan was awaiting approval by English Heritage .