

= Caernarfon town walls =

Caernarfon 's town walls are a medieval defensive structure around the town of Caernarfon in North Wales . The walls were constructed between 1283 and 1292 after the foundation of Caernarfon by Edward I , alongside the adjacent castle . The walls are 734 m (2 @, @ 408 ft) long and include eight towers and two medieval gatehouses . The project was completed using large numbers of labourers brought in from England ; the cost of building the walls came to around £ 3 @, @ 500 , a large sum for the period . The walls were significantly damaged during the rebellion of Madog ap Llywelyn in 1294 , and had to be repaired at considerable expense . Political changes in the 16th century reduced the need to maintain such defences around the town . Today the walls form part of the UNESCO world heritage site administered by Cadw . Historians Oliver Creighton and Robert Higham describe the defences as " a remarkably intact walled circuit " .

= = History = =

= = = 13th century = = =

Before the English construction of the town of Caernarfon , the area had been occupied first by the Romans , who built the fort of Segontium , and later by both the Normans and the Welsh princes . As a result of this long history , depicted in the Welsh saga of Mabinogion , the site was both culturally and politically significant to the medieval Welsh . The English kings and Welsh princes had vied for control of North Wales since the 1070s and the conflict had been renewed 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 . By summer 1283 Edward had secured Caernarfon and the surrounding area .

The king decided that the location would become the centre of a new county and the capital of the principality of North Wales , with a new castle and walled town forming the administrative centre . Edward 's plan was a colonial enterprise and placing the new town and walls on the Caernarfon site was in part a symbolic act to demonstrate English power ; the walls also symbolised the town 's status as the capital of North Wales .

Traditionally Caernarfon 's design and defences have been thought to have been inspired by the growth of the bastides . The bastides were new planned towns created in both France and English @-@ held Gascony during the period , characterised by grids of straight streets , often defended by combinations of castles and town walls . More recent research , however , has shown that English town design played a more significant role in shaping Caernarfon and other Edwardian town plans . In the case of Caernarfon , the town plan and walls were adapted to fit around the site of the former Norman castle on the site , which lay just outside the new town and was used a market place .

The walls of Caernarfon were built at the same time as the castle , under the overall supervision of Master James of Saint George , Edward 's chief architect in North Wales . Between 1283 to 1284 , Richard the Engineer acted as James ' deputy on the site ; later , between 1295 and 1308 , Walter of Hereford performed a similar role , and may have also been responsible for earlier work on the walls as well . Huge amounts of labourers were mobilised from across England for the task , massed at Chester and then brought into Wales for each summer building season . Work on the walls progressed quickly , albeit in uneven bursts : local houses were demolished to make way for the fortifications and the stone walls and gates were probably finished by 1292 . The cost of building the town walls was around £ 3 @, @ 500 , a large sum for the period .

Otto de Grandson , a favourite of Edward I , was appointed as constable of Caernarfon and justiciar of North Wales , with responsibility for security in the region . In 1294 , however , Madog ap Llywelyn revolted against English rule and undertook a wide campaign across North Wales , attacking the town of Caernarfon . Despite the walls , the town was overrun , the walls badly damaged , and the castle ? still largely unfinished ? was easily taken and set on fire . Edward responded with military

force the next year : he retook Caernarfon and ordered the town walls to be fully repaired by November 1295 , at a cost of around £ 1 @, @ 195 .

= = = 14th to 18th centuries = = =

The new town of Caernarfon was populated by English settlers , particularly from nearby Cheshire and Lancashire , and the town walls were in part designed to encourage immigrants and royal officials to settle there in safety . The town of Caernarfon did not prove a successful settlement , however ; by 1298 it had only 59 burgage tenements ? properties paying rent to the king ? making it far less prosperous than either neighbouring Conwy or Beaumaris , and the situation did not improve during the 14th century . In 1400 Welsh prince Owain Glyndŵr rose in rebellion against English rule , but despite attempts to take Caernarfon in 1403 and 1404 , the town 's defences held out . The ascension of the Tudor dynasty to the English throne resulted in a change in the way Wales was administered . The Tudors were Welsh in origin , and their rule lessened hostilities between the Welsh and English , reducing the need to maintain Caernarfon 's castle and walls and easing the restrictions on Welsh access to the town ? the Welsh were finally allowed to live inside Caernarfon in 1507 .

Around 1800 , Caernarfon 's local corporation undertook a programme of modernisation work , inserting several new gateways in the town walls ; other changes were also made to the walls during the period , with some towers being converted for use as administrative buildings and the gatehouses altered to accommodate more modern offices . During the 19th century the town of Caernarfon grew considerably , prompted by the slate trade and the construction of the Chester to Holyhead railway line . As a result of this population pressure , by the 20th century housing had encroached along the inside and outside of the town walls , so that in many places the walls had vanished from view . During the 20th century the walls were gradually acquired by the state and these houses demolished .

Today Caernarfon 's walls are managed by the Welsh heritage organisation Cadw as a tourist attraction , although only a small part of the wall @-@ walk is open to the public . The walls require ongoing maintenance ; in the financial year between 2002 and 2003 , for example , maintaining the historic fabric of the walls and the castle cost £ 4 @, @ 500 (£ 5 @, @ 710 in 2010 terms) . The walls were declared part of a UNESCO world heritage site in 1986 and are classed as a grade 1 listed building and hold scheduled monument status . They are considered by historians Oliver Creighton and Robert Higham to be " a remarkably intact walled circuit " .

= = Architecture = =

The Caernarfon town walls today present an unbroken , 734 m (2 @, @ 408 ft) long circuit around the town , enclosing 4 @. @ 18 hectares (10 @. @ 3 acres) , and are unusually well preserved . They are mostly built from the same carboniferous limestone used at the castle . The eight towers along the wall are mostly " gap @-@ backed " , lacking walls on the inside of the towers , and originally included removable wooden bridges to allow sections of the walls to be sealed off from attackers .

The two original entrances to the town were through the West and East Gates . The West Gate faced onto the harbour , and was also known as the Golden Gate (Welsh : Porth @-@ yr @-@ Aur) ; in the medieval period , this name would have evoked images of imperial Roman and Arthurian power , as it was the name of the primary gateway in the city of Constantinople . It was originally defended by a portcullis , but was modified with additional Gothic features in the 19th century . The East Gate formed the landward entrance to the town , originally overlooking the river Cadnant ? the river is now culverted over . The gatehouse contained offices for most of the period since its construction in the 13th century , first housing the royal exchequer , then Caernarfon 's town hall and finally the guildhall . The offices were finally removed in the 1960s . Little of the original gatehouse remains , due to 18th and 19th century building work , although the base of the towers remains medieval . Newer entrances to the town , made by creating additional gateways in the walls , include

Northgate , Greengate and the entrance to Market Street .

In the north @-@ west corner of the walls is the 14th @-@ century chapel of Saint Mary , built into the defences and using the only fully circular tower in the walls as a vestry . Further along the west side of the walls , several of the towers have been converted for various uses . One forms part of the County Offices , having been incorporated into the former County Gaol in the 19th century ; another has been used by the Royal Welsh Yacht Club since the 19th century , and a third has been converted into a holiday home by the Landmark Trust .