

= Orford Castle =

Orford Castle is a castle in the village of Orford , Suffolk , England , located 12 miles (20 km) northeast of Ipswich , with views over the Orford Ness . It was built between 1165 and 1173 by Henry II of England to consolidate royal power in the region . The well @-@ preserved keep , described by historian R. Allen Brown as " one of the most remarkable keeps in England " , is of a unique design and probably based on Byzantine architecture . The keep still stands among the earth @-@ covered remains of the outer fortifications .

= = History = =

= = = 12th century = = =

Prior to the building of Orford Castle , Suffolk was dominated by the Bigod family , who held the title of the Earl of Norfolk and owned key castles at Framlingham , Bungay , Walton and Thetford . Hugh Bigod had been one of a group of dissenting barons during the Anarchy in the reign of King Stephen , and Henry II wished to re @-@ establish royal influence across the region . Henry confiscated the four castles from Hugh , but returned Framlingham and Bungay to Hugh in 1165 . Henry then decided to build his own royal castle at Orford , near Framlingham , and construction work began in 1165 , concluding in 1173 . The Orford site was around two miles (3 @.@ 2 km) from the sea , lying on flat ground with swampy terrain slowly stretching away down to the river Ore , about half a mile (0 @.@ 8 km) away .

The design of the keep was unique , and has been termed " one of the most remarkable keeps in England " by historian R. Allen Brown . The 90 @-@ foot (27 metre) high central tower was circular in cross @-@ section with three rectangular , clasping towers built out from the 49 @-@ foot (15 metre) wide structure . The tower was based on a precise set of proportions , its various dimensions following the one to the root of two ratio found in many English churches of the period . Much of the interior is built with high @-@ quality ashlar stonework , with broad , 5 foot 6 inch (1 @.@ 7 metre) wide staircases . The best chambers were designed to catch the early morning sun , whilst the various parts of the keep were draught @-@ proofed with doors and carefully designed windows . Originally the roof of the keep , above the upper hall , would have formed a domed effect , with a tall steeple above that .

The keep was surrounded by a curtain wall with probably four flanking towers and a fortified gatehouse protecting a relatively small bailey ; these outer defences , rather than the keep , probably represented the main defences of the castle . The marshes nearby were drained turning the village of Orford into a sheltered port . The castle , including the surrounding ditch , palisade and stone bridge , cost £ 1 @,@ 413 to build , with the work possibly being conducted by the master mason Alnoth . Some of the timbers were brought from as far away as Scarborough , and the detailed stonework being carved from limestone from Caen in Normandy , the remainder of the stone being variously from local mudstone and coralline , as well as limestone from Northamptonshire .

The design of the keep has attracted much historical interest . Traditional explanations for its unusual plan argued that the castle was a transitional military design , combining both the circular features of later castles with the square angled buttresses of earlier Norman fortifications . More recent scholarship has critiqued this explanation . The design of the Orford keep is hard to justify in military terms , as the buttresses created additional blind spots for the defenders , whilst the chambers and staircase in the corners weakened the walls against attack . Square Norman keeps continued to be built after Orford , whilst Henry II was aware of fully circular castle designs before building the keep . A round keep was constructed at New Buckenham , Norfolk , in 1146 , for example . Historians have therefore questioned to what extent the design can be seen as legitimately transitional . Instead , historians now believe that the design of Orford Castle was instead probably driven by political symbolism . Heslop argues that the plain , simple elegance of the

architecture would , for mid @-@ 12th century nobility , have summoned up images of King Arthur , who was then widely believed to have had Roman or Greek links . The banded , angular features of the keep resembled the Theodosian Walls of Constantinople , then the idealised image of imperial power , and the keep as a whole , including the roof , may have been based on a hall that had been recently built in Constantinople by John II Komnenos .

= = = 13th to 15th centuries = = =

By the start of the 13th century , royal authority over Suffolk had been firmly established , after Henry II crushed the Bigods in the revolt of 1173 ? 1174 , Orford being heavily garrisoned during the conflict , with 20 knights being based there . Upon the collapse of the rebellion , Henry ordered the permanent confiscation of Framlingham Castle . The political importance of Orford Castle diminished after Henry 's death in 1189 , although the port of Orford grew in importance , however , handling more trade than the more famous port of Ipswich by the beginning of the century .

The castle was captured by Prince Louis of France who invaded England in 1216 at the invitation of the English barons who were disillusioned with King John . John Fitz @-@ Robert became the governor of the royal castle under the young Henry III , followed by Hubert de Burgh . Under Edward I governorship of the castle was given to the de Valoines family , and it passed by marriage to Robert de Ufford , the 1st Earl of Suffolk , who was granted it in perpetuity by Edward III in 1336 . No longer a royal castle , Orford was passed on through the Willoughby , Stanhope and Devereux families , whilst the surrounding economy of Orford went into decline . The estuary of the River Ore silted up and the Orford Ness spit increased , making the harbour access more difficult , resulting in a decline in trade , reducing the importance of the castle as the centre of local government .

The castle and surrounding lands were bought by the Seymour @-@ Conway family in 1754 . By the late @-@ 18th century only the north wall of the bailey survived and the roof and upper floors of the keep had badly decayed , and Francis Seymour @-@ Conway , the 2nd Marquess of Hertford , proposed destroying the building in 1805 . He was prevented from doing so by the government , on the grounds that the keep formed a valuable landmark for ships approaching from Holland , wishing to avoid the nearby sandbanks . Francis ' son , also called Francis , undertook conservation efforts in 1831 , installing a new , relatively flat , lead roof and a replacement upper floor installed . Francis furnished the top of the keep for use as an apartment by guests . By the 1840s , however , all of the surrounding bailey wall and mural towers had almost vanished , having been quarried for stone , and the foundations could only just be seen .

= = = Modern period = = =

Sir Arthur Churchman bought Orford Castle in 1928 , and in 1930 gave the property to the Orford Town Trust ; an appeal for money to maintain and restore it began shortly afterwards . During the Second World War the castle was refortified with barbed wire to form what was originally intended to be an anti @-@ aircraft emplacement , with Nissen huts erected around the keep . The castle was instead used as a radar emplacement , and a concrete floor was installed in the south @-@ east tower to support the equipment . These buildings were removed at the end of the conflict .

Orford Castle was given to the Ministry of Works in 1962 , and is now maintained by English Heritage . The keep of the castle is the only part of the structure remaining intact , although the earthwork remains of the bailey wall are still visible ; some of the ditches visible amongst the earthworks , however , are not medieval , but instead the result of the earlier quarrying of the bailey walls . The Orford Museum Trust has created exhibits in the upper hall featuring displays of archaeological artefacts found locally . Archaeological work to understand the surrounding environment has continued , most recently during 2002 to 2003 . The castle is a scheduled monument and a Grade I listed building .

= = Wild Man of Orford = =

Orford Castle is associated with the legend of the Wild Man of Orford . According to the chronicler Ralph of Coggeshall , a naked wild man , covered in hair , was caught in the nets of local fishermen around 1167 . The man was brought back to the castle where he was held for six months , being questioned or tortured ; he said nothing , and behaved in a feral fashion throughout . The wild man finally escaped from the castle . Later accounts described the captive as a merman , and the incident appears to have encouraged the growth in " wild men " carvings on local baptismal fonts - around twenty such fonts from the later medieval period exist in coastal areas of Suffolk and Norfolk , near Orford .