

= Harlech Castle =

Harlech Castle , located in Harlech , Gwynedd , Wales , is a medieval fortification , constructed atop a spur of rock close to the Irish Sea . It was built by Edward I during his invasion of Wales between 1282 and 1289 at the substantial cost of £ 8 @, @ 190 . Over the next few centuries , the castle played an important part in several wars , withstanding the siege of Madog ap Llywelyn between 1294 ? 95 , but falling to Owain Glyndŵr in 1404 . It then became Glyndŵr 's residence and military headquarters for the remainder of the uprising until being recaptured by English forces in 1409 . During the 15th century Wars of the Roses , Harlech was held by the Lancastrians for seven years , before Yorkist troops forced its surrender in 1468 , a siege memorialised in the song Men of Harlech . Following the outbreak of the English Civil War in 1642 , the castle was held by forces loyal to Charles I , holding out until 1647 when it became the last fortification to surrender to the Parliamentary armies . In the 21st century the ruined castle is managed by Cadw , the Welsh Government 's historic environment service , as a tourist attraction .

UNESCO considers Harlech 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 fortification is built of local stone and concentric in design , featuring a massive gatehouse that probably once provided high @-@ status accommodation for the castle constable and visiting dignitaries . The sea originally came much closer to Harlech than in modern times , and a water @-@ gate and a long flight of steps leads down from the castle to the former shore , which allowed the castle to be resupplied by sea during sieges . In keeping with Edward 's other castles in North Wales , the architecture of Harlech has close to links to that found in the County of Savoy during the same period , an influence probably derived from the Savoy origins of the main architect , James of Saint George .

= = History = =

= = = 13th ? 14th centuries = = =

In local mythology , the site of Harlech Castle in North Wales is associated with the legend of Branwen , a Welsh princess , but there is no evidence for a native Welsh fortification having been built there . The kings of England and the Welsh princes had vied for control of North Wales since the 1070s and the conflict was 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 . English forces advanced down the Conwy valley and through Dolwyddelan and Castell y Bere , onto Harlech , which Sir Otton de Grandson took with 560 infantry in May .

Edward ordered the construction of a castle at Harlech , one of seven built across North Wales in the wake of the 1282 campaign . Money to pay for the initial phase arrived in mid @-@ May and carpenters and 35 stonemasons were dispatched in June and July to commence work . By the winter of 1283 , the first 15 feet (4 @. @ 6 m) of the inner walls had been constructed , allowing the castle to be defended in the event of an attack , and a small , planned town had been founded alongside the castle . Sir John Bonvillars was appointed the constable of the castle in 1285 ; after his death in 1287 his wife , Agnes , took up the role until 1290 .

Construction continued under the overall direction of James of Saint George , a Savoy architect and military engineer . In 1286 , at the height of the construction , the workforce comprised 546 general labourers , 115 quarriers , 30 blacksmiths , 22 carpenters and 227 stonemasons , and the project was costing nearly £ 240 a month . The castle was essentially complete by the end of 1289 , having cost an estimated £ 8 @, @ 190 , around 10 percent of the £ 80 @, @ 000 that Edward spent on castle @-@ building in Wales between 1277 and 1304 .

Harlech was established with a garrison of 36 men : a constable , 30 men , including 10 crossbowmen , a chaplain , a smith , carpenter and stonemason , and Master James was rewarded

by being made the constable of Harlech from 1290 ? 93 . In 1294 , Madog ap Llywelyn began an uprising against English rule that spread quickly through Wales . Several English @-@ held towns were razed and Harlech , along with Criccieth Castle and Aberystwyth Castle , were besieged that winter . Fresh supplies were sent from Ireland by sea , arriving via Harlech 's water gate , and the uprising was quashed . In the aftermath of the revolt , additional defences were built around the route down to the sea . Further work was undertaken between 1323 ? 24 , following the Despenser War ; Edward II was threatened in the region by the Mortimer Marcher Lord family , and ordered his sheriff , Sir Gruffudd Llywd , to extend the defences leading up to the gatehouse with additional towers .

= = = 15th ? 17th centuries = = =

In 1400 a revolt broke out in North Wales against English rule , led by Owain Glyndŵr . By 1403 only a handful of castles , including Harlech , still stood against the rebels , but the castle was under @-@ equipped and under @-@ staffed to withstand a siege , the garrison having just three shields , eight helmets , six lances , ten pairs of gloves , and four guns . At the end of 1404 , the castle fell to Glyndŵr . Harlech became his residence , family home and military headquarters for four years ; he held his second parliament in Harlech in August 1405 . In 1408 English forces under the command of the future Henry V placed Harlech and its commander , Edmund Mortimer , under siege , conducting a bombardment with cannon , probably destroying the south and east parts of the outer walls . When this failed to take the castle , Henry left John Talbot in charge of the siege and moved on to deal with Aberystwyth Castle . Supplies finally ran short , Mortimer and many of his men died of exhaustion , and Harlech fell in February 1409 .

In the 15th century , Harlech was involved in the series of civil wars known as the Wars of the Roses that broke out between the rival factions of the House of Lancaster and York . In 1460 , following the Battle of Northampton , Queen Margaret of Anjou fled to the castle and between 1461 ? 68 it was held by her Lancastrian supporters , under the command of Dafydd ap Ieuan , against the Yorkist Edward IV . Thanks to its natural defences and the supply route by sea , Harlech held out and as other fortresses fell , eventually became the last major stronghold still under Lancastrian control . The castle became a base for their operations across the region : there were planned operations in 1464 , Sir Richard Tunstall mounted attacks from Harlech in 1466 and Jasper Tudor landed there with French reinforcements in 1468 , before then raiding the town of Denbigh . Tudors ' arrival caused Edward IV to order William Herbert to mobilise an army , possibly up to 10 @, @ 000 strong , to finally seize the castle . After a month 's siege , the small garrison surrendered on 14 August . This siege is credited with inspiring the song Men of Harlech .

The English Civil War broke out in 1642 between the Royalist supporters of Charles I and the supporters of Parliament . Harlech had not apparently been repaired following the 1468 siege , and had become completely dilapidated , with the exception of the gatehouse , which was used for the local assizes . In 1644 Prince Rupert appointed a local Royalist , Colonel William Owen , as the castle 's constable , and Owen was entrusted with repairing the fortifications . A long siege ensued from June 1646 until 15 March 1647 , when the garrison of 44 men surrendered to Major @-@ General Thomas Mytton . The castle was the last mainland royal fortress to surrender in the war , and the date marked the end of the first phase of the war . The castle was no longer required for the security of North Wales and , to prevent any further use by the Royalists , Parliament ordered its slighting , or destruction . The orders were only partially carried out , however , and the gatehouse staircases were destroyed and the castle rendered generally unusable , but it was not totally demolished . Stone from the castle was reused to build houses in the local town .

= = = 18th ? 21st centuries = = =

In the late @-@ 18th and 19th centuries , the picturesque ruins of Harlech began to attract visits from prominent artists , including John Cotman , Henry Gastineau , Paul Sandby , J. M. W. Turner and John Varley . In 1914 it was transferred from the Merioneth Crown Estate to the control of the

Office of Works , who commenced a major restoration project after the end of World War I. In 1969 the castle was transferred to the Welsh Office and then to Cadw , who manage the property in the 21st century as a tourist attraction . Harlech was declared part of the Castles and Town Walls of King Edward in Gwynedd World Heritage site in 1986 , UNESCO considering Harlech one of " the finest examples of late 13th century and early 14th century military architecture in Europe " .

= = Architecture = =

Harlech Castle rests upon part of the Harlech Dome , a spur of rock almost 200 feet (61 m) high ; the land falls away sharply on the north and west , and a ditch cut into the rock protects the remaining approaches to the castle . The castle has a concentric design , with one line of defences enclosed by another , forming an inner and outer ward ; the outer wall was originally somewhat taller than today . Harlech is built from local grey @-@ green sandstone , with large , regular blocks used for the towers and irregular material , possibly taken from the ditch , used for the walls . A softer yellow sandstone is used for the decorative work in the castle , possibly quarried from around Egryn Abbey near Barmouth .

The main entrance to the castle would have involved crossing a stone bridge between the two easterly ditch bridge towers and the main gatehouse ; little remains of the bridge towers today and a timber entrance way to the gatehouse replaces the bridge . A water gate overlooks a protected stairway of 127 steps that runs down to the foot of the cliffs . In the 13th century , the sea came up close to the stairway , allowing resupply by sea , but today the sea has retreated significantly , making it more difficult to envisage the concept in its original setting .

The gatehouse follows the design , sometimes termed the Tonbridge @-@ style , that became popular during the 13th century , with two massive " D @-@ shaped " defensive towers flanking the entrance . The passage into the castle was guarded by three portcullises and at least two heavy doors . The gatehouse has two upper floors , broken up into various rooms . Each floor has three large windows overlooking the inner ward ; the second floor has two additional grand windows on the sides of the gatehouse ; the gatehouse was fitted with fireplaces and would originally have had prominent chimneys . The use of these rooms has been the subject of academic debate : historian Arnold Taylor argued that the first floor of the gatehouse was used by the constable as living accommodation , with the second floor used by senior visitors ; Jeremy Ashbee has since challenged this interpretation , suggesting the high status accommodation may instead have been located within the inner ward , and the gatehouse used for other purposes .

The inner ward is guarded by four large circular towers . Over time these acquired various names : in 1343 , clockwise from the north @-@ east , they were called Le Prisontour , Turris Ultra Gardinium , Le Wedercoktour and Le Chapeltour , but by 1564 they had been renamed the Debtors ' , Mortimer , Bronwen and Armourer 's Towers respectively . Le Prisontour incorporated a dungeon and the Le Chapeltour may have contained an artillery workshop in the 16th century . Several ranges of buildings were built around the inner ward , including a chapel , kitchen , service buildings , a granary and a great hall . The battlements may originally have been built with triple finials in a similar fashion to Conwy , although little remains of these in the modern era .

The architecture of Harlech has close links to that found in the kingdom of Savoy in the same period . These include semi @-@ circular door arches , window styles , corbelled towers and positioning of putlog holes , and are usually ascribed to the influence of the Savoy architect Master James . The links between the Harlech 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 Harlech project .