

= Longtown Castle =

Longtown Castle , also termed Ewias Lacey in early accounts , is a ruined Norman motte @-@ and @-@ bailey fortification in Longtown , Herefordshire . Built around 1175 by Hugh de Lacy , possibly reusing former Roman earthworks , the castle had an unusual design with three baileys and two large enclosures to protect the neighbouring town . Early in the next century the castle was rebuilt in stone , with a circular keep erected on the motte and a gatehouse constructed between the inner and outer western baileys . By the 14th century , Longtown Castle had fallen into decline . Despite being pressed back into use during the Owain Glyndŵr rising in 1403 , it became ruined . In the 21st century the castle is maintained by English Heritage and operated as a tourist attraction .

= = History = =

= = = Earlier sites = = =

It is uncertain when the first fortification at Longtown was built . The first defences may have been built during either the Iron Age or Roman , or Anglo @-@ Saxon periods , but this remains uncertain . If Roman defences were constructed at the site , it was probably because of a Roman road that may have run nearby , and the defences may well have then been reused in the building of the current castle , parts of whose earthworks have square , angular corners , similar to those of Roman forts but otherwise unusual in 12th century English castles .

= = = Initial construction = = =

After the Norman invasion of England and Wales in the late 11th century , a small castle was built at Pont Hedre , close to the site of the current castle , by either Roger de Lacy or Pain fitzJohn in order to protect the river crossing there . Longtown was then probably built to replace this older castle , probably around 1175 , by Hugh de Lacy , a successful favourite of Henry II and an administrator in newly conquered Ireland . Hugh had acquired the local lands around Ewias Lacey , an important Marcher Lord territory , in the 1160s and early 1170s . The early castle was occasionally also called Ewias Lacey , named after the wider lordship ; " Ewias " was a term meaning " sheep district " .

Longtown Castle was designed as a motte and bailey castle , on high ground alongside the River Monnow . More defensible sites on higher ground existed nearby , but this location was strategically well located close to the River , an important transport route . It had a 10 @-@ metre (33 ft) high motte and an unusual rectangular bailey design around 125 metres (410 ft) by 110 metres (360 ft) , divided into three parts , two baileys in the west and one in the east , each capable of being defended independently and enclosing around 1 @-@ 21 hectares (3 @-@ 0 acres) in total . The 12th @-@ century castle was built primarily of timber with at least some stone in its design , but this stone was then reused when the castle was rebuilt in the 13th century . Two circuits of earthworks to the north and south of the castle , possibly with wooden palisades , enclosed the early settlement of Longtown . The region was troubled for the rest of the century , with revolts by the local Welsh against Anglo @-@ Norman rule .

= = = Expansion and decline = = =

The castle was extensively rebuilt in stone during the early 13th century . The stone keep , dating from the 1220s or 1230s , was constructed in the form of a circular great tower , with walls 5 @-@ metre (16 ft) thick and three turrets spaced evenly around the outside and a hall on the first floor . This circular design is particular to the Welsh Marches , and is also seen at Skenfrith and Caldicot . The reason for this choice is unclear , as it appears to have carried few military advantages . The stonework is made up of shale rubble with cut ashlar detailing ; the walls are around 4 @-@ metre (

13 ft) thick , but the keep 's foundations are extremely shallow . An inner gate to the western baileys was built to a simple design with two small turrets , and seems to have been fitted with a portcullis , while a 3 @-@ metre (9 @.@ 8 ft) thick wall encircled the rest of the inner western bailey ; another stone wall seems to have protected the outer half of the bailey . Inside the inner western bailey appears to have been the castle 's great hall and other service buildings . The work on the castle cost the de Lacys around £ 37 , a large sum of money for the time . The settlement of Longtown was probably established at the same time as the castle , and initially prospered .

The de Lacy family controlled Longtown Castle until Walter de Lacy 's death in 1234 . John Fitzgeoffrey then acquired the castle , during a period of increased conflict and tension between the Welsh princes Llywelyn the Great and Dafydd ap Llywelyn and the English marcher lords . The castle then passed to John Verdon and his sons , who struggled with local lawlessness and the Welsh revolts which continued until the end of the century . Edward temporarily confiscated the castle and estates from John 's son , Theobald Verdon , and in 1316 the castle passed to Bartholomew de Berghersh . The castle continued to be used as a fortification , and in 1317 orders were given to garrison it with 30 men .

The castle began to decline in importance , however , and in 1369 passed to the Despensers and then the Beauchamps , neither of whom used the castle . It was temporarily refortified by Henry IV in response to the Owain Glyndŵr uprising in North Wales in 1403 . The Nevilles acquired the property in the 15th century and it remained in the control of the Lords of Abergavenny until the 1970s . After the Black Death the town 's population fell away sharply as well , the protected area north of the castle was abandoned , and by the 16th century it was no longer a functioning trading centre .

It is unclear if the castle and town played any part in the English Civil War between 1642 ? 45 , although cannon balls from the period have been discovered within the castle . Local oral tradition states that the castle was slighted , or deliberately destroyed , during the war . Stones from the castle were used for local building work by the 17th century onwards , and by the 18th century a house and shop had been constructed in the eastern bailey of the castle , along with a yard and garden . A gallows operated at the castle until 1790 . Buildings continued to encroach on the castle . By the end of the 19th century a school and a house , Castle Lodge , had been built in the castle grounds . Other buildings were built as lean @-@ to 's against the castle walls .

= = = 20th - 21st centuries = = =

Longtown Castle was acquired by the Ministry of Works in the 1970s . It was in a poor condition and extensive restoration work was carried out , including the removal of many of the buildings that had encroached on the walls . In the 21st century , the central parts of Longtown Castle , including the ruined keep , the internal gatehouse and fragments of the curtain wall , are maintained by English Heritage as a tourist attraction , although the wider earthworks lie on common land . The castle is protected as a scheduled monument .