





Caergwrle Castle. Line engraving after Henry Gastineau. circa 1835. From the west?

Previous page: Caergwrle Castle from the south. © Crown copyright: Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales.

Caergwrle (Hope) Castle

Although this hilltop stronghold was the last castle to have been built by a Welsh prince - Dafydd ap Llywelyn, the brother of Llywelyn ap Gruffudd - it was erected with the permission of King Edward I in 1277-82, after the first Welsh war. It was from this probably unfinished castle that Dafydd launched his attack on Hawarden Castle in 1282, an event that sparked the second war. Although the Welsh themselves damaged the castle to prevent its use by the English, it was soon repaired and came into the ownership of King Edward's Queen Eleanor, in 1283, and was known as Hope. Suffering an accidental fire in 1283, probably destroying the newly erected timber buildings, by the early 1300s Caergwrle had become redundant and was in ruins.

At one end of the summit of the hill is a stub of walling, all that is left of a great round tower that the English demolished in 1282. The castle

had two other towers, both D-shaped, and parts of the curtain wall survive, one section having latrine chutes. A bank and ditch defend the curtain on this side. Excavations in the interior revealed a bread oven and the well. The castle sits within a much larger enclosure that is post-Roman in date.

Further Reading

- R. Avent, *Castles of the princes of Gwynedd*. Cardiff: HMSO, 1983.
- P. R. Davis, *Castles of the Welsh princes*. Talybont: Y Lolfa, 2007.
- D. J. C. King, 'Two castles in northern Powys: Dinas Bran and Caergwrle', *Archaeologia Cambrensis* **123** (1974), 113-39.
- J. Manley, 'Excavations at Caergwrle Castle, Clwyd, north Wales', *Medieval Archaeology* **38** (1994), 83-133.



Caergwrlle Castle - from the north. East wall with pentagonal buttress to the left; probable site of entry gate centre and north tower to the right (and below right). North tower D-shaped but rather segmental externally. East tower foundations only, but segmental externally and polygonal internally. South tower probably the keep, fully cylindrical, but perhaps never completed. The castle appears to be unfinished. Plan © Cambrian Archaeological Association. Reproduced with thanks.

