





*Castell Dinas Brân, Denbighshire. Plan, © Cambrian Archaeological Association.*

*Previous page: Castell Dinas Brân from the west. © Crown copyright: Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales.*

### Castell Dinas Brân

Set on a hill overlooking the town of Llangollen, and only accessible by steep climbs, this very ruined castle of the Welsh lords of north Powys was built within an Iron Age hillfort about 1260. It had a short life, as the Welsh abandoned and set fire to it in the war of 1277. Nevertheless, the commander of the advancing English forces, the earl of Lincoln, recommended that it should be garrisoned as it was such a strong fortress. It was in the possession of the earl of Surrey in the 1280s, but it was soon totally abandoned when that earl built the new castle of Holt.

Rectangular in plan, and similar to Dolforwyn, with rock-cut ditches on three sides, the castle has a rectangular keep at the east end, a small twin-towered gatehouse set below it on the north, and the very fragmentary remains of an apsidal tower in the middle of the south curtain, with the site of the hall on its east side. Both the keep and gatehouse had latrines, as shown by the outfall chutes on the south and north sides

respectively. The keep probably had just one floor over a basement, the entrance being via a staircase on the west side that led up to the first floor. Few other features survive, but the well was set in the south-east corner of the ditch. Built of mudstone quarried from the ditches, fragments of carved sandstone masonry indicate that there was more to this castle in terms of quality than the ruins suggest, and that it was once a handsome building.

#### 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.
- C. Kightly, *Dinas Bran Castle, Llangollen / Castell Dinas Bran, Llangollen*. Ruthin: Denbighshire County Council, 2003.
- D. J. C. King, 'Two castles in northern Powys: Dinas Bran and Caergwrle', *Archaeologia Cambrensis* **123** (1974), 113-39.



*ABOVE: Castell Dinas Brân, near Llangollen. Those who made it were - from L-R: "Annie", Alice Bray, Ian Rennie, Chris Jones-Jenkins, Wendy Ball, John Moss, Joy Tudberry, Pat Jones-Jenkins.  
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