



*Ewloe Castle. Upper Ward and Welsh Tower from the south.*

### **Ewloe Castle**

If any monument represents Llywelyn ap Gruffudd's growing power in Wales it is Ewloe Castle, positioned as it was (and is) right on the border with England, only a few miles from the great city and stronghold of Chester. This area of north-east Wales was regained by Llywelyn in 1257, and, although various arguments have been put forward for the dating of the castle, it is now generally accepted that it was built soon after 1257, with the inner ward constructed before the outer.

Llywelyn built the castle within the medieval forest of Ewloe and in 1265 he went on from his position of power to destroy the neighbouring English castle of Hawarden, later to be rebuilt in the 1280s. However, as a result of the first Welsh war of 1276-7 Llywelyn lost most of his territorial possessions outside north-west Wales and Ewloe virtually disappears from history. A document of 1311, the only record that mentions the castle, states that it was 'in great part standing'.

Defended by a ditch on two sides, the core of the castle is the stone enclosure of the inner or upper ward. In it sits the main tower, an elongated apsidal structure of a type to be seen at other native Welsh castles, such as Castell y

Bere. The original entrance to the upper ward was over a bridge and through a simple doorway on the north-east side. A staircase, with a doorway at the foot, led up to the first-floor entrance of the tower, and from there a mural stairway led on up to the battlements. The basement would have only been accessible through a trapdoor in the floor of the main room, and presumably was used for storage. The hall or chamber on the first floor has two windows, and there may have been a third in the now-collapsed north wall of the tower.

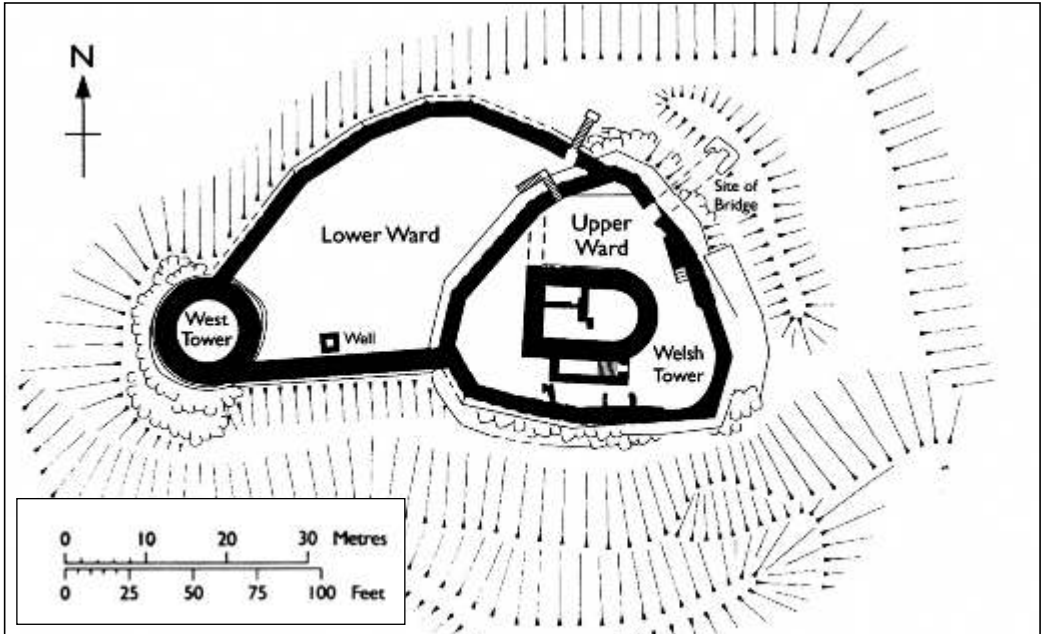
Both ends of the curtain wall of the outer or lower ward butt up against the upper ward, rather than being bonded with it, and this suggests that it was added later, but probably soon after the initial phase. The enclosure, dominated by the circular west tower, would originally have been full of wooden buildings, but nothing survives today.

### ***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. F. Renn and R. Avent, *Flint Castle, Ewloe Castle*. Revised edition. Cardiff: Cadw, 2001.



ABOVE: Ewloe Castle, plan, © Cadw Welsh Government Crown Copyright.

BELOW: Artist's impression as it may have appeared when completed by Llywelyn ap Gruffudd soon after 1257. This view from the south-west shows the Welsh Tower dominating the Upper Ward. The form of the bridge entrance is, of necessity, entirely conjectural. (Illustration by Chris Jones Jenkins, 1994, reproduced with thanks).





*ABOVE: Entrance forebuilding/staircase leading to the first floor entrance and a further set of straight stairs within the thickness of the wall up to the battlements.*

*BELOW: The square flat rear of the Welsh Tower from the lower ward. All the walls revet a rock-cut platform.*

