





*Fig. 1. Rhuddlan Castle, from the west, across the river Clwyd. West Gatehouse centre. Previous page: Looking north toward the sea. © Crown copyright: Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales.*

### **Rhuddlan Castle**

The first castle at Rhuddlan was the motte and bailey know as Twthill a few hundred metres south-east of the stone castle, although there was a Welsh palace here long before. The motte, accessible to the public, was built by Robert of Rhuddlan in 1073, and survived as an earth-and-timber castle well into the thirteenth century, changing hands several times between the Normans/English and the Welsh.

All this was to change as a result of King Edward I's war of 1276-7, for a new castle was begun here in the summer of 1277, soon after Flint had been started, and work continued until early 1282, costing almost £10,000. Further work on accommodation was paid for from 1283 until 1286, work that included a chapel for the use of Queen Eleanor. Adjacent to the castle was a new town with earth and timber defences; a section of the earth bank still survives.

Like Flint, the town was damaged in the Glyndŵr uprising in 1400, although the castle held out. Like many other Welsh castles, it was

held for the king in the Civil War of the 1640s, but was taken in 1646 and partly demolished two years later. If anything emphasizes the importance of sea, as well as land routes in the positioning of the Edwardian castles in north Wales, Rhuddlan is a case in point. The river Clwyd that flows past the castle had to be canalized so that shipping could access the castle and its defensible dock, set below the main body of the castle, work that initially involved many hundreds of diggers from diverse parts of England.

The castle had seven entrances, ranging from gatehouses to small posterns: four into the outer ward and three into the inner ward. Of the outer gateways, one lay against Gillot's Tower which commanded the dock, and there was a small entrance or postern in the river wall; there are a number of arrowslits visible where this wall survives to some height. Friary Gate on the eastern side was soon to be blocked up and converted into a turret (1300-2). The main entrance to the outer ward was that from new borough, Town Gate. Although

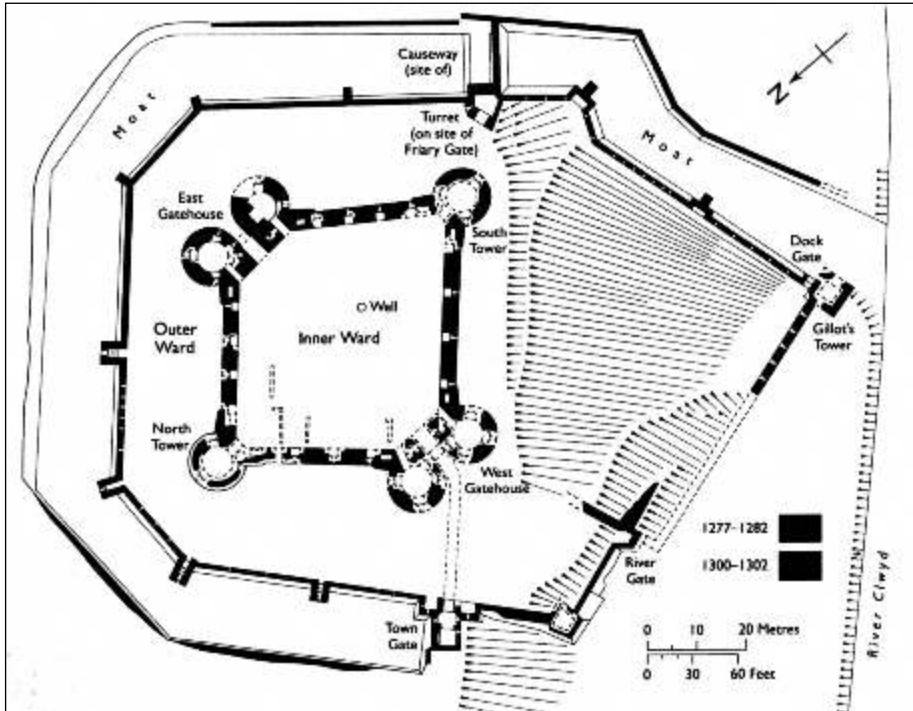


Fig. 2 Rhuddlan Castle plan. © Cadw Welsh Government, Crown Copyright.

much of the curtain wall of the outer ward has been robbed, enough remains to show how it revetted the dry moat on three sides of the castle, and that it had a number of turrets with steps (some later being blocked), that enabled defenders to access the moat from under cover. The wall also displays the remains of a large number of arrowslits that enabled archers to fire down into the moat, whilst other archers could also use loops set higher in the curtain to fire beyond the moat.

The castle's big defended entrances, each originally with a gate and portcullis, were the west and east twin-towered gatehouses in two corners of the diamond-shaped inner ward; stone robbing has, however, removed evidence for many of the original features of the west gatehouse. The other two corners each have a circular tower, a small postern gate being adjacent to the north tower. Five of the six inner ward towers had four floors each for accommodation, but the south tower has five. The towers are all

linked by a curtain wall that survives up to the wall-walks, even though the crenellated battlements no longer survive. Two features to note in the curtains are the thickening against the towers, to accommodate latrine chutes, and the remains of small projections in the centres of the curtains are all that is left of what are known as box machicolations, which permitted defenders to drop missiles on attackers below.

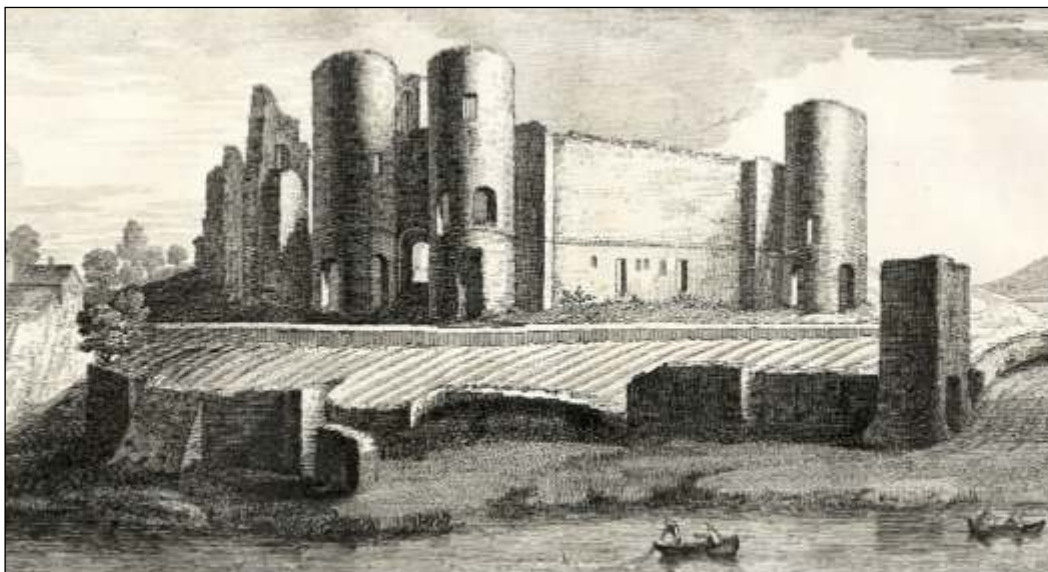
Although the inner ward looks bare today, it would originally been full of timber buildings providing additional accommodation as well as services, including halls either side of a central kitchen.

### Further Reading

A. Taylor, *Rhuddlan Castle*. (Abridged). Cardiff: Cadw, 2004. [Fuller version, 4th edition, Cadw, 1987].

Rick Turner, 'The Life and Career of Richard the Engineer', in Diane M. Williams & John R Kenyon (eds.), *The Impact of the Edwardian Castles in Wales*, Oxbow Books. 2010.





*ABOVE: Fig. 3. Rhuddlan Castle, S & N Buck, 1742, from the SW. View of Inner Ward. Twin-towered West Gatehouse, centre, South Tower, Gillot's Tower and Dock Gate. River Clwyd in the foreground.*

*BELOW: Fig. 4. Rhuddlan Castle from the north. North Tower, centre, West Gatehouse, right; turreted steps down to the moat foreground. These series of steps (4, N & E sides were probably walled and roofed for protection).*





*ABOVE: Fig. 5. The East Gate. Similar to the West Gate. Four ground floor arrow loops per tower.*

*BELOW: Figs. 6 & 7. The East Gate. The square portcullis slots either side, preceded by flanking arrow loops, and followed by a rebate for two-leafed gates, draw-bar holes, and stone benches. Square grooves (5½ inches wide x 5 in. deep) also occur at Harlech, and Beaumaris, and might be one indication of James of St George's involvement with some details (they are ½ round elsewhere).*



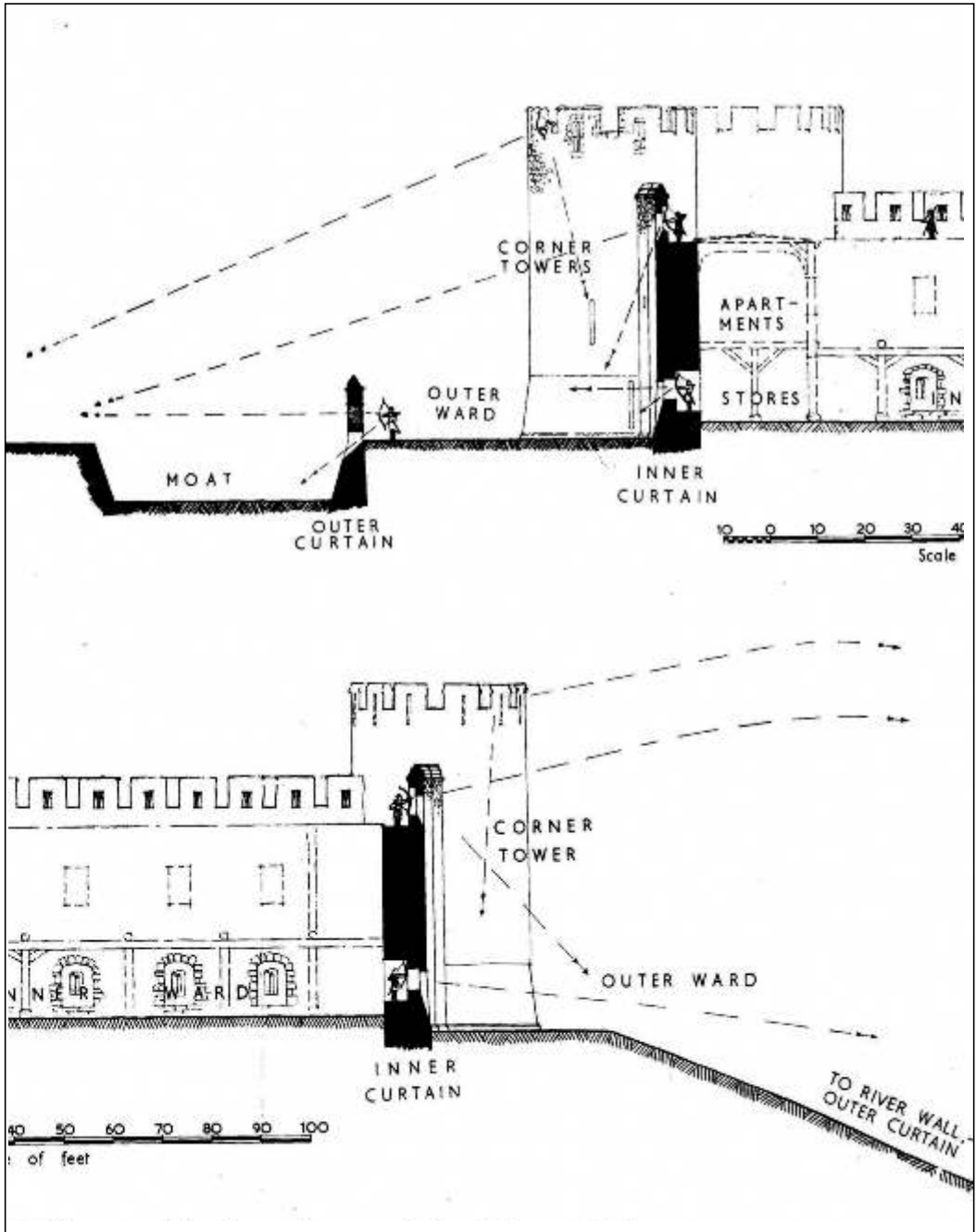


Fig. 8. 'Diagrammatic section of Rhuddlan Castle to illustrate fire command from the inner and outer curtains in a typical concentric plan'. From 'Medieval England', Vol. 1, A. L. Poole (ed.), Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1958, pp. 98-127. A little known and interesting discussion by Arnold Taylor, one which does not appear in his own bibliography.





*Figs. 9 & 10. Digital images of Rhuddlan (from W (above) & NW) produced in preparation for the next 'Lost in Castles' DVD release. © Joseph A. Fox. Digital artist Joseph Fox comments:*

*'Rhuddlan Castle is one of my current projects. This is a very underrated site compared to the castles at Conwy, Caernarfon and Beaumaris, but it is an important site that I am looking forward to opening out to a wider audience. During the computer reconstruction I have already made several discoveries about the structure of the castle that have been previously unknown. It is only by constructing a coherent three dimensional model with every staircase and corridor that you can truly understand such a complex structure'. The DVD is due for release in the Spring of 2016.*





*ABOVE: Fig. 11. Rhuddlan Castle, from the west. Seen at the assumed point of completion by 1302. A digital image by Joseph Fox. (© Joseph A. Fox). In preparation of the Rhuddlan DVD for 'Lost in Castles'. Did the river really lap up to the walls of the outer ward? Terry Ball agreed (see 1987 Cadw guidebook p. 9).*

*BELOW: Fig. 12. One of the classic posters produced by LMS (London Midland and Scottish Railways) in 1929, to promote rail travel to Rhuddlan; (station now demolished and buried under rubble). Artwork is by the highly acclaimed Norman Wilkinson, RI, who produced a whole series for LMS, LNER and many others. The view is from the west. Compare to fig. 11 above.*

