

2. Were castles easy to attack?

4. What parts of the castle would you not be able to go to?

5. Would you be treated like royalty each day, or would you be stuck mucking out stables?

3. How many rooms are there in one castle?

1. Were knights going off to fight battles every other day?

Have you ever wondered...what was it like to actually live in a medieval castle?

6. Did they have pets there? If so, which ones?



2. Some castles were easy to attack and some were very hard, it depends on what castle you attack, and what method of attacking you use.

3. On average, each castle has about twelve types of main rooms.

4. Nowhere, because unless they worked for the king, peasants generally weren't allowed in the castle.

5. If you lived in the medieval times, unless you were royalty, you would probably be stuck mucking out the stables.

Well, here is the **ANSWER** to some of your questions:

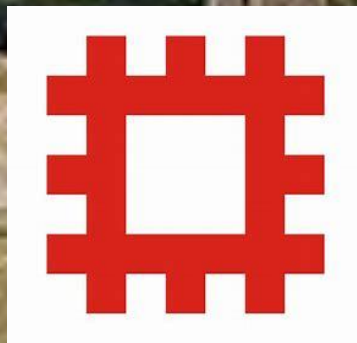
1. No, knights wouldn't be fighting battles every other day, because sometimes they would last for weeks, and they would need time to recover

6. They mainly just had cats and dogs and farm animals (e.g. horse, pig, cow)

And now we are going to look at one of the castles from the Middle Ages: Dover Castle

The history of Dover Castle

By Amelia Chard



What is Dover Castle, and how does it fit into a 'type'?

Dover Castle is a medieval castle, which is shown by the fact that it was built and founded in the Middle Ages. It has other characteristics that give this away too, like:

- Portcullis
- Moat
- Towers
- Stone keep

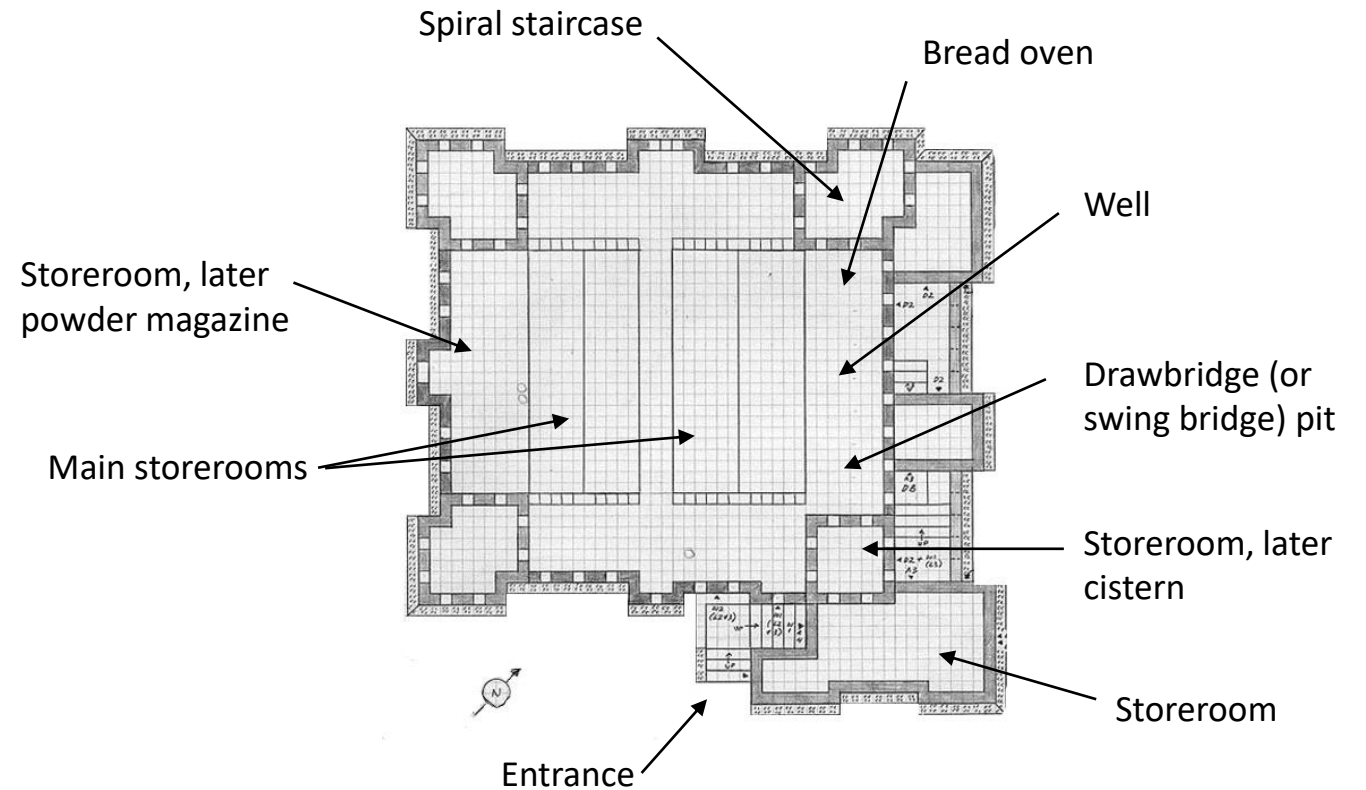
Dover Castle is in Dover, Kent. It was actually used as a military fortress and it has been described as the "Key to England" due to its defensive significance throughout history. Some sources say it is the largest castle in England, a title also claimed by Windsor Castle. It was built in 1066 by William the Conqueror to help prevent anyone repeating his own invasion. The castle was largely rebuilt in stone and a massive keep added by Henry II in the later half of the 12th century CE. Despite its fine defences, the castle did not put off attackers and was besieged in 1216 CE by Prince Louis of France.

Development

- Many centuries before Dover Castle was built, the spectacular site above the cliffs may well have been the site of an Iron Age hillfort.
- The Castle was first built entirely out of clay, however, it collapsed to the ground and the clay was then used as the flooring for many of the ground-floor rooms.
- From the 1740s onwards the medieval banks and ditches were changed as the castle was adapted for artillery warfare. Later in the 18th century, when England faced the threat of invasion from France, even more additions were made to the castle's defences. To house the huge numbers of troops needed to man them, a network of tunnels was dug in from the cliff face for use as barracks.

Most of William the Conqueror's defences and earthworks have been lost or built over, and what can be seen today was built mostly by Henry II (1154-1189 CE). From about 1170 to the late 1180's CE, Henry II added important features, transforming the entire castle by building the courtyard with the massive stone keep and a towered curtain wall. The centre of the castle, the keep, was protected by two towered walls and a perimeter ditch and barbican – a fortified wall to protect a gate.

Plan of the ground floor:



Main defensive features

In 1216–17 these defences were put to the test when Dover withstood a long siege by an invasion force led by Prince Louis of France with English barons rebelling against King John. The fortress resisted ten months of bombardment by siege engines, undermining by tunnels and eventually hand-to-hand fighting. I think this proves that Dover Castle is pretty difficult to attack.

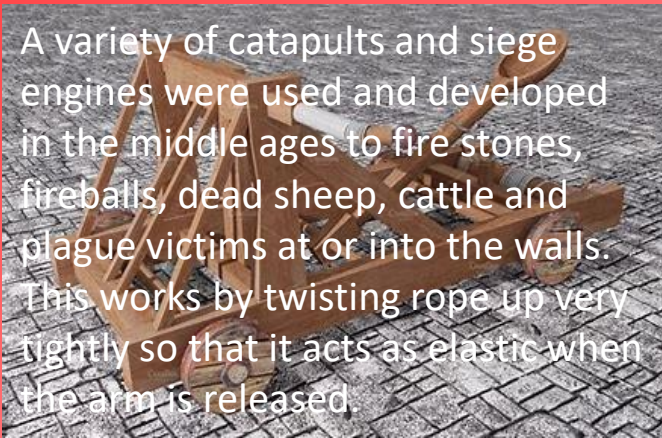


Attacking methods in medieval castles:

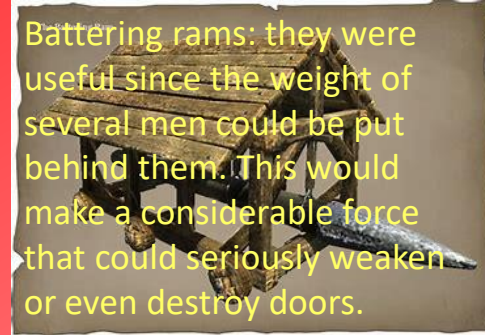
Fire: it was the best way to attack motte and bailey castles since they were made entirely out of wood. The fire would be started by building a fire against the palisade or shooting lit arrows into the courtyard. The inhabitants would be forced to leave, allowing the attackers to kill them or take them prisoner. This is one of the reasons that motte and bailey castles were replaced by stone keep ones.



A variety of catapults and siege engines were used and developed in the middle ages to fire stones, fireballs, dead sheep, cattle and plague victims at or into the walls. This works by twisting rope up very tightly so that it acts as elastic when the arm is released.



Battering rams: they were useful since the weight of several men could be put behind them. This would make a considerable force that could seriously weaken or even destroy doors.



Mining: Attackers would dig a tunnel up to the castle walls, under the gatehouse if possible. They would then set charge and cause an explosion to make the walls collapse. The advantage of mining was that the attack could not be seen by the people living in the castle. However, if those inside the castle were aware that attackers were mining underground, they would often mine from the castle to meet the attackers underground and there would be a sword battle.

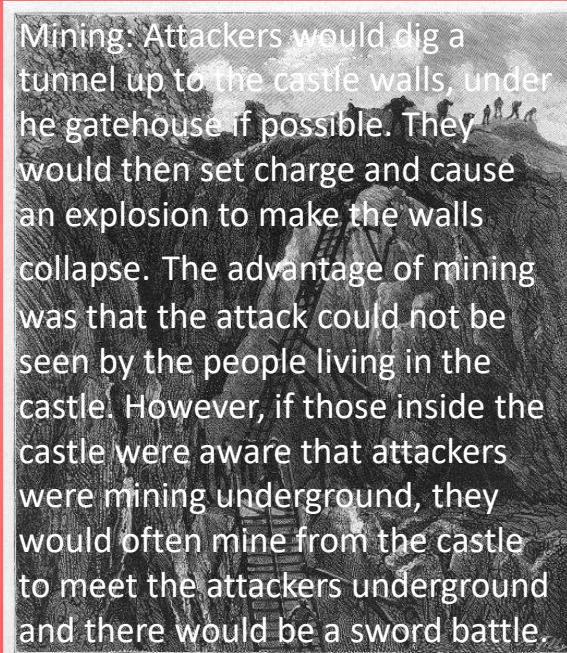


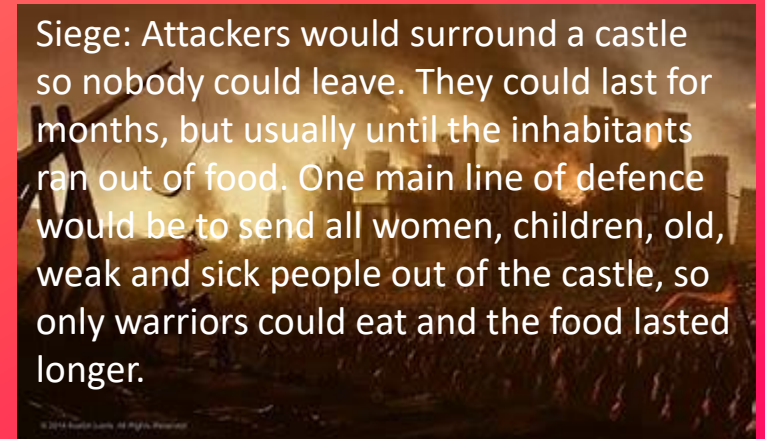
Fig. 4. — Les mines de bouille au moyen âge. Coupe montrant l'ascension au moyen des échelles.

Ladders were used to climb over the walls to fight the inhabitants inside the castle. However, they had the disadvantage of leaving the men climbing them subject to being attacked by arrows, boiling water and oil, or being thrown to the ground if the ladder was pushed away from the wall. To prevent this type of attack the Belfry or Siege Tower was developed. The



Belfry was a large structure on wheels that could be pushed up to the castle walls. Ladders inside the Belfry allowed attackers to climb to the top under cover and get into the castle. Castle owners prevented this type of attack by piling earth up against the castle walls so that the Belfry, which was on wheels, could not be pushed near to the castle.

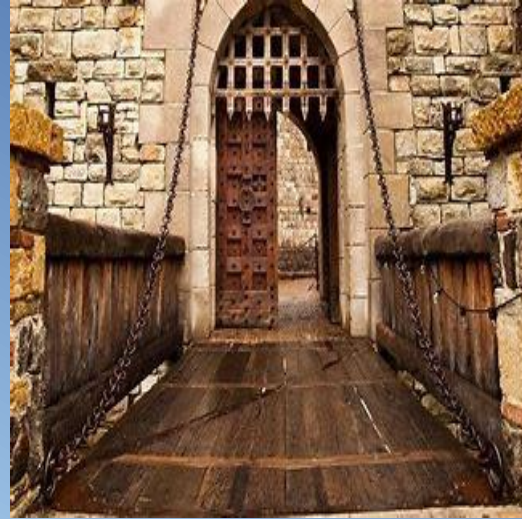
Siege: Attackers would surround a castle so nobody could leave. They could last for months, but usually until the inhabitants ran out of food. One main line of defence would be to send all women, children, old, weak and sick people out of the castle, so only warriors could eat and the food lasted longer.



Defensive features of most medieval castles:



This is a portcullis. It is a heavy, vertically closing gate, consisting of a latticed grille made of wood, metal or a mixture of the two. On the underneath, it had spikes to stick firmly into the ground and secure it from the bottom. They protected the entrances to many medieval castles, securely closing off the castle during a time of attack or siege. Dover castle had a portcullis, and would have used it to keep out Prince Louis VIII and the French in 1216.



This type of bridge is called a drawbridge, which is like a regular bridge, but can be pulled up to the gate using chains, cutting off any means of reaching the castle for unwanted visitors or attackers. It also provided a way to stop siege weapons like battering rams to knock down the walls or gates. Normally they would be made out of wood as it is light enough to lift. Dover castle did not have a drawbridge, although it did have a horizontal swing bridge that pivoted into a ditch!



Having a lake around a castle is called a moat, it goes right up to the castle walls and is normally quite wide and deep. It stops attackers getting close to the castle easily as they would have to swim or row across. Dover castle had a moat but it had no water in so it was more like a ditch.



The sheer thickness of stone walls (as opposed to wooden ones) served as protection against catapults and trebuchets. They were usually tall enough to make climbing ladders difficult for attackers, and provided an excellent viewpoint for archers and guards. Most medieval castles were made out of wood to start with, and they were called motte and bailey castles, however, they also caught fire very easily, so they started being built from stone instead.



Double walls were even better than single stone walls as the entrance to the inner wall was on the other side than the outer wall, so attackers would have to run a half lap of the castle without being shot by arrows to get to the other door. Then, they would have the problem of trying to knock it down. If they tried to run with a battering ram, it would slow them down immensely, making them a better target for archers. The inner walls were normally taller than the outer ones, just for extra protection.

Sources: look into the past

A historical source is something that tells us about life in the past, such as a document, a picture or an object. It may be a primary source, from the time, or a secondary source, created later. Any sort of artefact from the period in question that conveys information can qualify as a source. Primary sources are important as they tell you what was going on in fine detail, and are generally correct as **they were there at the time**. Secondary sources tend not to be as reliable, as they are **a reconstruction of a primary source**, like a drawing of a battle scene or a tale constructed out of rumours.

Which of these is a primary source?

- ❖ A fiction book of medieval dragon myths
- ❖ A document written by a knight about a battle that he was in
- ❖ An interpretation of a medieval battle written by a modern historian

Answer: a document written by a knight about a battle he was in – if it was him at the battle, and he wrote the document, then it is a primary source.

This source is an extract from 'Flores Historiarum', meaning 'Flowers of History' in Latin by a monk in 1204:

'...Louis, with a powerful force of knights and soldiers laid siege to Dover Castle, having first sent to his father for a petraria which was called in French 'Malvoisine' [a mangonel], and the French having disposed this and the other engines before the castle, they began to batter the walls incessantly; but Hubert de Burgh, a brave knight, with a hundred and forty knights and a large number of soldiers who were defending the castle, destroyed many of the enemy, until the French feeling their loss removed their tents and engines farther from the castle; on this Louis was greatly enraged and swore he would not leave the place till the castle was taken and all the garrison were hung. They therefore, to strike terror into them, built a number of shops and other buildings in front of the entrance to the castle, so that the place appeared like a market; for they hoped that they would, by hunger and protracted siege, force them to surrender, as they would not subdue them by force of arms ...

Louis then summoned Hubert de Burgh, constable of Dover Castle, to a conference, and said to him, 'Your lord King John is dead, and you cannot hold this castle against me for long, as you have no protector; therefore give up the castle, and become faithful to me, and I will enrich you with honours, and you shall hold a high post among my advisers...

[Hubert] then returned to the castle and told his friends what Louis had said, but they were all unanimous in refusing to surrender it to him, lest they might be branded with treachery for a cowardly submission. When this was announced to Louis and the barons they determined to reduce the smaller castles throughout the country, that, after the lesser fortresses were in his power, they might attack the larger ones; they then raised siege and returned to the city of London.

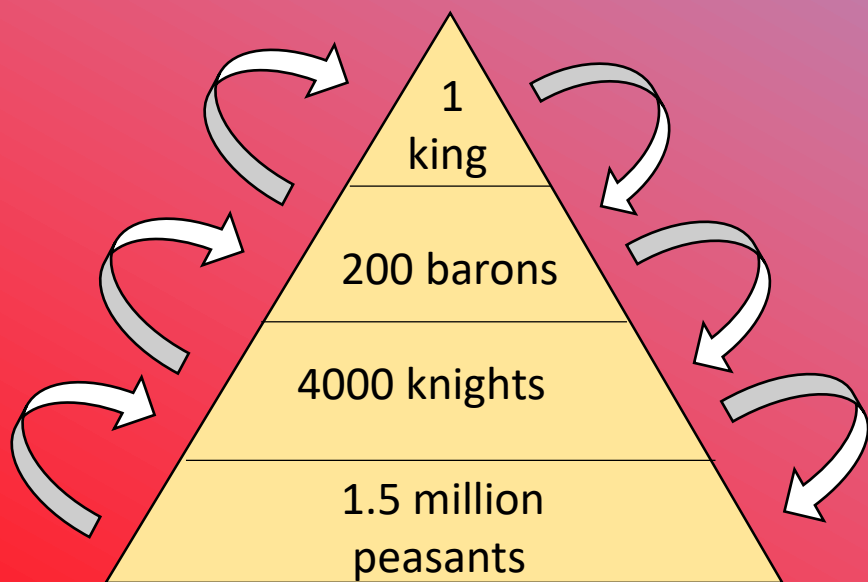
This may just look like a bunch of unpronounceable words (← like that one just there), but it actually means something along the lines of: Louis had lots of soldiers so he attacked Dover Castle. He had asked his dad for a big catapult but they didn't use it, so instead they hit the walls a lot. A brave knight called Hubert de Burgh who had 140 knights and lots of soldiers destroyed many of Louis's, so Louis moved his camp further back and swore that he wouldn't leave until he had taken the castle over. He went up to the front gate and made his camp look like a market so they would give up out of hunger. Louis then summoned Hubert de Burgh and told him that his king was dead and that if he surrendered, he would be made royal advisor. Hubert went back to the castle and told his friends, who all said not to. When Louis was told, he said he would take over the smaller castles and come back to the bigger ones then. After that they left and went back to London.

Bonus information!

There was actually a hierarchy of people in the Middle Ages, called the Feudal System, which was imported by William the Conqueror:

The king gives land to the barons and gets loyalty and control in return.
The barons give land to the knights and get an army and money in return.
The knights give land to the peasants (villeins) and gets servants and money in return.

The peasants can't give land, but knights can also give work to serfs, which are basically homeless people, and they live with the peasants.



In return of land, peasants were either required to serve the knight or pay rent for the land. They had no rights and they were also not allowed to marry without the permission of their Lords. It would be possible for a peasant to be knighted for bravery or some great service. It may then be possible for the peasant knight to gain a noble title through marriage to an heiress or a widow.

Most commonly knights were paid with land (which was worked by peasants). By granting them land, known as a Knight's Fee, the lord ensured that his knights were able to make enough money to provide for themselves, buy armour and horses, and focus on being professional warriors. Some knights were moderately wealthy, some rich and others poor. It depended on the quality of the lands they had to support them.

Many Barons chose to build castles on their land and fill them with knights who, under the Feudal System, were bound to protect the Baron and his family. Others established large manor houses.

This system helped William keep control as he didn't have to control all of it, only the barons. He could still get an army if he needed it, and the land was still his, so he was just doing the equivalent of loaning it. This also helped as they had to take an oath to their landlord, and if they broke it, they would become a serf and would be cursed by God forever. The oath of homage is:

'I become your man from this day forward for life and limb and loyalty. I shall be true and faithful to you for the lands I hold for you.'

It is simple really. The king rules the country – he owns everything. Barons are given a high rank and land by the king, knights fight for the country and peasants do all the work. This method of running the country was very successful because it was much more orderly than the previous way, the king controls everything in different categories.

Glossary

Arrow – a long straight stick with a sharp metal end that is launched via a bow, used as a weapon.

Artillery - Artillery is a class of heavy military ranged weapons built to launch ammunition.

Baron - a person who held lands or property from a powerful overlord.

Battering ram - a heavy beam, originally with an end in the form of a carved ram's head, formerly used in breaching fortifications

Battlement walk - a parapet at the top of a wall, especially of a fort or castle, that has regularly spaced squared openings for shooting through.

Besieged – if a city is under siege, then it is besieged

Castle - a large building, typically of the medieval period, fortified against attack with thick walls, battlements, towers, and in many cases a moat.

Catapult - a device used to throw or hurl a projectile a great distance.

Cowardly - lacking courage.

Curtain wall - a fortified wall around a medieval castle, typically linking towers together.

Dover Castle - a medieval castle in Dover, Kent, England.

Fortified - provided with defensive works as protection against attack.

Garrison - a group of troops stationed in a fortress or town to defend it

Gatehouse - a room over a city or palace gate, often used as a prison

Grille - a grating or screen of metal bars or wires.

Heiress - a woman who is legally entitled to the property or rank of another on that person's death.

Hierarchy - a system in which members of an organization or society are ranked according to relative status or authority.

Historian - an expert in or student of history.

Inhabitant - a person or animal that lives in or occupies a place.

Invasion - an instance of invading a country or region with an armed force.

Iron Age - a prehistoric period that followed the Bronze Age, when weapons and tools came to be made of iron.

Keep - The main tower of a castle or fortress, located within the castle walls.

King - the male leader of a country

Knight - a man who served his sovereign or lord as a mounted soldier in armour.

Lattice - a structure consisting of strips of wood or metal crossed and fastened together with square or diamond-shaped spaces left between

Mangonel - a military device for throwing stones and other missiles

Manor house - a large country house with lands.

Medieval - relating to the Middle Ages.

Middle ages - the period of European history from c.1000 to 1453.

Monk - a member of a religious community of men typically living under vows of poverty and obedience.

Motte and Bailey - an early form of medieval fortification.

Myth - a fictitious or imaginary person or thing.

Palisade - a fence of wooden stakes or iron railings fixed in the ground.

Peasant – a commoner from the medieval times.

Petraria - a medieval stone-throwing siege engine, used to hurl large rocks against the walls of the besieged city, in an attempt to break down the wall and create an entry point.

Pharos - a lighthouse or beacon to guide sailors.

Powder magazine - a storehouse where weapons and ammunition are stored.

Royalty - people of royal blood or status.

Serf - A servant bound by the feudal system to working on his lord's estate.

Sword battle – a battle with swords, rather than siege

Treachery - betrayal of trust.

Trebuchet - a machine used in medieval siege warfare for hurling large stones or other missiles.

Undermining – breaking away stone from under the ground

Villein – another word for peasant

Widow – a woman who has lost her husband to death and has not remarried.

Windsor Castle - a royal residence at Windsor, founded by William the Conqueror

William the Conqueror - the first Norman king of England.

Bibliography:



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My school history book