

# ◆ ‘At Pevensey doth a ruin’d Castle stand’: the development of the post-Norman castle

Allan Brodie and  
Mark Bowden

*In c.1193 part of the south wall of the Roman fort (subsequently referred to as ‘the fort’) at Pevensey collapsed, prompting the construction of what has become the postern gate of the medieval castle (subsequently referred to as ‘the castle’). This was apparently built to fit a pre-existing earthwork defence that appears to have been constructed in the decades after 1066. Documentary evidence for this structure continues until the mid-13th century. It appears that the current stone castle was constructed between c.1254 and the year-long siege of 1264–5. This seems to have taken place in several stages, presumably as the pre-existing timber and earthwork structure was replaced, a section at a time, to allow the castle to remain potentially defensible. Around the inside of the walls of the castle, there is evidence for a series of single-storeyed buildings, seven of which were heated by fireplaces. Once the castle came into the possession of Queen Eleanor of Provence in 1268, references can be found to at least one hall, various chambers and a chapel. On her death in 1291, it passed to her son, and in 1302 a new timber-framed chapel appears to have been constructed. However, it is clear that by 1306 the castle buildings were beginning to decay, and a slow process of decline and abandonment began, although the site remained of sufficient military significance to be pressed into action again in 1399, 1588, and during the Second World War.*

## INTRODUCTION

On 28 September 1066 William the Conqueror landed at Pevensey, garrisoned the apparently undefended Roman fort before moving on to Hastings to erect a castle and defeat King Harold’s forces on 14 October 1066. There are no indications in contemporary sources of any resistance to the Norman landing, probably because the Roman fortification was in a state of disrepair and deemed unfit to defend. The invaders appear to have created a hastily constructed earthwork to make the eastern part of the fort defensible, probably with a palisade. Following the defeat of the Anglo-Saxons, a more robust earthwork defence was created, and it is likely that in the years immediately after the Conquest, the monumental stone keep was erected. This is an odd structure, more symbolic than practical, a tribute to the might of the Roman Empire and thus a deliberate reflection of the growing power of the Norman Empire. More particularly it was a statement of William’s parity or superiority to Julius Caesar. It would have also firmly signalled to

the native population that the Normans had come to stay. These ideas have been explored in Bowden and Brodie (forthcoming).

Pevensey Castle held out for six weeks when besieged in 1088, and throughout the 12th century it was clearly a site that was desirable to hold. However, by the late 12th century, it is clear that substantial parts of the south wall of the Roman fort at Pevensey had fallen into the sea, and it appears that in c.1193 a sudden event occurred that required a larger investment than simply routine maintenance. Almost £57 was spent, probably due to the collapse of bastion 10 of the Roman fortification, located on the south side of the castle. This prompted the creation of what is now the postern gate to plug the gap suddenly left in the fortifications. These appear to have still been a combination of the Roman walls and Norman earthwork defences; references to the latter continue until the mid-13th century, suggesting that the current stone castle had not yet been created.

This article describes the development of the stone castle between the late 12th and mid-13th

centuries, before Queen Eleanor of Provence inherited the site in 1268, an event that generated detailed records of expenditure. These demonstrate that little more than maintenance took place during her tenure. They also reveal that the castle was occupied by a complex of buildings providing suitably comfortable accommodation for the royal family. On her death in 1291, the castle passed to her son, Edward I, and maintenance work seems to have paused. In 1301–2 this resumed, yet in 1306 Pevensey Castle was described as being ruinous, and a survey of the building was conducted. Significant work was deemed necessary but seems never to have occurred. Instead, the castle began a slow decline, though it was pressed into military use again in 1399 to provide a diversion for Henry Bolingbroke's landing in Yorkshire, to resist the Spanish Armada in 1588 and the threat of invasion in 1940.

### THE NORMAN LEGACY

A detailed discussion of the landing of William the Conqueror at Pevensey in 1066 and the development of the site in the immediate aftermath of this event have been published elsewhere (Bowden and Brodie forthcoming), but to understand the backdrop to the creation of the existing stone castle, developments before the late 12th century will be briefly reprised here.

The Saxon Shore Fort at Pevensey (*Anderitum*) was built soon after AD 293 (Fulford and Tyers 1995, 1011–2; Pearson 2002, 34, 59–60) (Fig. 1). It was first mentioned in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle in AD 491, but Pevensey does not feature between then and the reign of Edward the Confessor when there are several mentions of its haven or anchorage (Garmonsway 1986, 168–9, 177–8). The reason for its re-emergence in the Chronicle may be due to Edward's greater focus on relations with Normandy than towards more northern European territories.



Fig. 1. In this recent aerial photograph of Pevensey Castle, the sea originally lay to the south (left) of the castle, where the original low cliffs on which it stands can be seen. Much of the south wall of the Roman fortification has slid into the sea and mostly been washed away, but one section that may have collapsed in c.1193 can be seen on the slope beneath the medieval castle. Access into Pevensey Haven was to the east (right) of this photograph [26764/026] © Historic England Archive

For Pevensey, the culmination in the Chronicle's pages is, of course, William the Conqueror's arrival there on 28 September 1066 (Garmonsway 1986, 199). The south wall of the Roman fort appears to have already been falling into the sea by this date, meaning that it was probably unmanned and deemed to be indefensible as no contemporary sources, including the Bayeux Tapestry, suggest that any resistance was offered to impede the landing. A garrison was apparently left behind while the main Norman force moved on to Hastings, and there is some archaeological and documentary evidence that the decaying fort was strengthened by the provision of earthwork defences and a palisade, or some form of timber fortification. A small ditch of possibly 11th-century date was excavated in the 1930s (Lyne 2009, 57–8, figs 11D and 15C), creating a narrow enclosure within the fort's east gate. This would have made the less ruinous eastern part of the fort defensible. The suggestion by Combes and Lyne (1995) that the *Haestingaceastra* of the Bayeux Tapestry was Pevensey rather than Hastings has been dealt with fully by Haslam (2021, this

volume) and is discussed in Bowden and Brodie (forthcoming).

As will be discussed later, the stone castle was created in the mid-13th century, but Pevensey was an active military and political site during the two centuries after 1066, including holding out for six weeks during the siege of 1088. Any initial, hastily created defences in 1066 must have been replaced by something more substantial, probably soon after the invasion. Apart from the keep, there is no evidence of any other structures or earthworks from this period. It, therefore, seems plausible that any missing fortification built at some point between 1066 and the mid-13th century occupied the footprint of the existing castle and the surrounding moat. As will be discussed later, the mid-13th century castle was built in a phased programme, from which it can be inferred that the intermediate defensive structure broadly followed the lines of the stone castle.

A substantial earthwork complex with a strong palisade would have provided an appropriate setting for the monumental stone keep (Fig. 2).



Fig. 2. The undisturbed stonework of the ground floor of the keep is in contrast to the robbed-out rubble core, surviving above. A fragment of wall that may have formed the base of the stair into the keep can be seen on the left of the photograph; to the extreme right is the postern gate, which was probably rebuilt in 1193. [DP236256] © Historic England Archive

This was constructed against the south-east wall of the Roman fortification, probably in the decades immediately after 1066. Some work was almost certainly occurring between 1100 and 1123 (Renn 1960, 4), and there is a reference to a *turris de Penvesel* in 1130 (Peers 1933, 7; Salzman 1906, 2). A piece of pottery from an early floor has been thought likely to predate the 1120s (Renn 1960, 4). The form of the Norman keep is puzzling, its monumental scale being in marked contrast to the small area that it encloses. Attached to the north-west face is a huge bastion, while there are two slightly smaller, though still monumental, bastions facing westwards. There were apparently two further eastward projecting bastions on the east side that may have collapsed during the 14th century. The two west-facing bastions are not parallel to each other or the keep, and observing this, Renn suggested that such a form was typical of the 11th century (*ibid.*, 22). Perhaps the keep was in existence by 1088, when the Castle was besieged.

The ashlar of the ground floor of the keep has not been robbed, due to it having been covered by an earth or clay mound. The surviving fabric reveals no openings, and access was apparently at the first-floor level via a bridge, which is referred to in 1289–90 (Salzman 1906, 11). There are two small sections of wall located to the west side of the northern end of the keep that may be the base of this structure. Early French fortified towers were usually entered via a bridge at about 6m above ground level (Thompson 1991, 39), and the castles depicted by the Bayeux Tapestry – Bayeux, Dinan, Dol and Rennes – have bridges up to the entrances of their keeps.

By the early 18th century, the ground floor of the keep was covered by a mound of earth or clay. Based on slight archaeological evidence, this arrangement is usually thought to date from the late 16th or 17th century, possibly to provide a gun platform for defence against the Armada or during the Civil Wars (Fulford and Rippon 2011, 31). The presence of high-quality ashlar on the ground floor of the keep implies that the mound should not be regarded as an original feature, even though the absence of any openings at this level might suggest the opposite. In England, there are several examples where stone and timber castle towers were embanked with earth to form a motte in an initial construction phase. In the case of Pevensey, however, the weight of evidence favours the later 16th- or 17th-century date for the mound. This point is discussed further in the survey

report and in our previous paper (Bowden *et al.* 2019, 65–6; Bowden and Brodie forthcoming).

The monumental form of the keep, with its huge bastions but contrasting relatively small size, may have had parallels in northern France that have not survived, but it seems more plausible that its inspiration was the surrounding Roman fortification, paying homage in particular to the monumentality of the Roman west gate (Renn 1971, 62; Renn 2015, 209) (Fig. 3). The keep appears to be as much a statement as a building, sending a strong message to the conquered Anglo-Saxons of Norman dominance and their continuing presence. There might also be another symbolic dimension to the structure – a deliberate and monumental marking of the place where the Normans first set foot in England in 1066. The Normans, and William the Conqueror in particular, were conscious of the Romans' legacy, and chroniclers regularly paralleled the ancient empire with the growing Norman one (Davison 1967, 40–1; Wheatley 2004, 54–5, 130–2). William was prone to compare himself to Caesar and other classical heroes (Wheatley 2004, 131) and one such example occurred at Pevensey. According to a legend recorded in the early 12th century by William of Malmesbury and Wace later in the century (William of Malmesbury 1848, Book III, Sidenote; Wace 1837, Chapter XII), on landing at Pevensey William fell on the beach and 'seized' England in his hands. This is a direct copy of a tale that was told of Julius Caesar landing in Africa (Lawson 2003, 66–7; G Suetonius Tranquillus 1913 paragraph 59, 83) and was designed to flatter William. What would be more natural, therefore, than that William should commemorate his conquest of England not only by the establishment of a monastery at Battle (Wheatley 2004, 89) but also by the construction at Pevensey of a tower that made direct reference to the Roman military architecture.

#### CREATING THE MEDIEVAL CASTLE

After the battle of Hastings, Pevensey was held by William the Conqueror and later his half-brother, Robert, Count of Mortain (d. 1095), who had obtained it by 1082 at the latest (Renn 1971, 61; Creighton 2005, 43). Robert's son and successor, Count William of Mortain, unsuccessfully rose against Henry I, and in 1101 Pevensey Castle was granted to Gilbert de Aquila (of Laigle) (Thompson 1997, 211). Gilbert's son Richer held the manor of



Fig. 3. The West Gate of the Roman fort was flanked by monumental bastions, a formula that almost certainly inspired the design of the Norman keep. [DP236266] © Historic England Archive

Pevensey but may not have controlled the castle (*ibid.*, 212; for a full history of the l'Aigle family, see Thompson 1995). In any case, Richer was dispossessed by King Stephen, who granted the castle to Gilbert fitz Gilbert de Clare (c.1100–d.1148), perhaps on his creation as Earl of Pembroke in 1138 (Flanagan 2004). In 1147 Gilbert rebelled when Stephen refused to give him the castles surrendered by his nephew Gilbert fitz Richard de Clare, first Earl of Hertford. Pevensey was again besieged and fell due to famine rather than assault: King Stephen abandoned an attempt to storm the castle because of the strength of its 'most ancient walls' and its location (Salzmann 1906, 3). Before his death in the following year, Gilbert made his peace with

Stephen, who then bestowed Pevensey Castle upon his eldest son, Eustace, on whose death in 1153 it passed to Stephen's second son, William, who had already become Earl of Warenne and Lord of Lewes Rape by his marriage to Isabel de Warenne (Salzmann 1906, 3; Thompson 1997, 213). Early in 1157, Henry II demanded that William return his castles at Norwich and Pevensey to the Crown because he wished to prevent a conflict between the Earl of Warenne and his great rival Hugh Bigod (Thompson 1997, 213).

Henry II returned the manor of Pevensey to Richer de l'Aigle in 1157 but retained control of the castle, and there is thereafter a partial record of royal expenditure on the castle. Sums of £3 3s, 8d.,

£5 10s. 5d. and £4 10s. 8d. were spent on 'works' in the years to Michaelmas 1161, 1167 and 1178 respectively (Renn 1971, 63; Thompson 1997, 213). In addition, the gaol cost 13s. 4d. in 1178–79 and the following year, there were repairs amounting to £3 10s. 0d. to the buildings of the tower (*domorum turris*), presumably the keep (Renn 1971, 63). Repairs to the buildings and palisades, respectively, cost £5 in 1182–83 and £5 18s. 4d. in 1187–88 (Salzmann 1906, 4). These small, occasional expenses suggest the maintenance of fairly modest structures and contrast with the larger payments occurring during the middle years of Richard I's reign. In 1193, £25 15s. 3d. was spent, while during the following year, the constable of Pevensey received a further £31 1s. 3d., a backdated payment for works that he had carried out (Renn 1971, 63). The expenditure of almost £57 in a single year suggests that the constable was responding to a sudden and unforeseen event.

This sum suggests something beyond routine maintenance but does not suggest a major building programme. Between 1192 and 1197 the Pipe Rolls record that about £80 was spent on Pevensey Castle, accounting for about 3–4% of the overall national expenditure of the Exchequer during those years. To get an impression of what could be constructed for that kind of money, around £6,000 was spent on Dover Castle during the 1180s, when the Great Tower and inner bailey were constructed (Colvin 1963, 2, 630, 632; Phillipotts 2008).

Bastion 10 of the Roman fortification, on the south side of the castle, has collapsed, but unlike other sections of the south wall it was not washed away, suggesting that this probably occurred when the sea was already in retreat. Therefore, might the expenditure of £57 be a response to that event, creating what is now the postern gate to plug the gap suddenly left in the fortifications? There is architectural evidence that the postern gate predates the stone castle. Inevitably a clear straight joint exists between it and the Roman wall, but equally, there is an obvious joint between the gate and the adjacent south wall of the medieval castle. Therefore, the postern gate predates the existence of the castle, in its current stone form, and its purpose was to secure the integrity of the earth and timber fortification established by the Normans during the previous century and a half. Before the addition of the long wall extending northwards, the western side of the postern gate seems to have been shaped

to be incorporated into the earthwork and palisade fortification, rather than the line of the south wall of the current castle (Fig. 4).

There is clear documentary evidence of the continuing existence of the timber fortifications from the late 12th century onwards. Louis Salzman found a reference to the stockade in 1188 when the Pipe Roll recorded a payment of £5 18s. 4d. for the repairs to the palisades of the castle (Salzmann 1906, 4). Heckage, a payment in commutation of the duty to take part in palisade maintenance, is mentioned at the beginning of the 13th century. Heckage was also recorded at the other Sussex castles of Arundel, Bramber, Lewes and Hastings (Higham and Barker 1992, 129). Salzman described a claim brought in 1203 regarding fees 'for the service of enclosing or making a certain stockade (*heisam*) upon the vallum of the Castle of Pevensey' (Salzmann 1906, 4). The levying of heckage finally ended in 1254, suggesting that the timber structure had been or was being superseded by the stone castle (Thompson 1997, 216; Fulford and Rippon 2011, 2).

Apart from the sudden outlay of £57 in the mid-1190s, the annual sums expended suggest only repairs to existing structures, with the tower being mentioned specifically (Renn 1971, 63). Elias the Engineer was recorded at Pevensey in 1195, and his documented career working for the Crown lasted from 1187 until 1203 and included a variety of castles, hunting lodges and work at Westminster (Colvin 1963, 1, 60; Harvey 1987, 91). An Elias the Carpenter was mentioned at Pevensey in 1196 (Renn 1971, 64). This could be the same man, his changed title suggesting his interest at this stage being in the wooden palisade. At this date, whatever was going on at Pevensey was not yet the construction of the castle in its present form.

As noted above, it is assumed that the timber and earthwork defences occupied approximately the line now taken by the curtain wall of the masonry castle and its moat. It would be tempting to suggest that some physical evidence survives in the slight bank alongside the inner edge of the northern arm of the moat (a on Fig. 8). However, this is highly unlikely given the amount of disturbance caused by the clearing out of the moat by the Ministry of Works in 1936. It is probably necessary to accept that any physical evidence was destroyed by the creation of the curtain wall and the moat and that the existence of this phase of



Fig. 4. There are clear joints between the postern gate and the Roman wall to the left, and the mid-13th century castle wall to the right. The wall projecting forwards may have been designed to link with the earlier earth and timber fortification. [DP236364] © Historic England Archive

fortification will continue to rely on documentary evidence and the logical inference that it was required.

During the later years of John's reign, the then Gilbert II de l'Aigle returned from Normandy and seemed to have gained control of Pevensey. However, he sided against the king, who seized Pevensey Castle early in 1216, or possibly in the previous year, and initially put it into a state of defence. The future Louis VIII of France landed in Kent in May 1216. As John retired through Sussex, he ordered the castle at Pevensey to be dismantled (Salzmann 1906, 5), perhaps because the weakness of the garrison rendered it indefensible. Thompson, however, suggests that Gilbert retained control of the castle and that the king wanted it slighted because he feared that Gilbert, whose main landed interests lay in Normandy, would surrender the castle to Louis (Thompson 1997, 215). However, it is uncertain whether John's orders were ever carried out (Goodall 1999, 22).

King Henry III returned Gilbert de l'Aigle's English estates to him but initially retained control of Pevensey Castle. Later, Gilbert recovered the castle and apparently held it until his death in 1231. The castle and honour were escheated to the king, who bestowed it in 1233 upon Peter de Rivaux, a senior member of the Poitevin faction at court. During the next year, however, when the Poitevins fell suddenly from favour (Carpenter 2020, 150, 154), Henry III compelled Peter to relinquish the castle to the Earl of Hereford and, after putting Robert le Sauvage in charge of it, it was transferred to Gilbert Marshal, Earl of Pembroke, who was in the ascendant (Salzmann 1906, 5; Carpenter 2020, 158–60). Having quarrelled with the king, however, Marshal surrendered the castle in 1240 (Thompson 1997, 216; Carpenter 2020, 240–2).

Six years later, the king conferred Pevensey upon his wife's uncle, Peter of Savoy, in whose hands it was at the time of the Battle of Lewes on 15 May 1264 (Carpenter 2020, 212–15, 243). He

was granted permission by Richard de Wyche, Bishop of Chichester between 1245 and 1253, to move the chapel built near the keep of Pevensey to another suitable site; perhaps this was to allow new construction work to proceed (Peers 1933, 6). Immediately after the victory of the baronial troops at Lewes, the royal garrison of Pevensey was commanded not to leave the castle without further orders (Salzmann 1906, 5–6), and they were joined by many who had fled from the battlefield. The castle was immediately besieged by Simon de Montfort the younger, but it held out and the siege was not lifted until July 1265, making it the longest siege in medieval English history (Salzmann 1906, 6; Goodall 1999, 24; Chapman 2007, 107).

The firm resistance of the castle in 1264–5 implies that this was no longer a rather elderly earthwork and palisade fortification, but the much more substantial castle that we see today. When Peter of Savoy died in 1268, he left most of his possessions in England to his niece, Queen Eleanor of Provence. As will be discussed later, during the 1270s, 1280s and 1290s, there are regular references to repairs to existing structures rather than new ones (Salzmann 1906, 7–13). Documents all point to a construction date before 1264 for the creation of the castle.

Although documentary evidence is lacking, Peter of Savoy is most likely to have been behind its creation, presumably soon after he obtained the site in 1246. The decades prior to this had witnessed the castle changing hands regularly, and Peter was active in building fortifications in his native Savoy, including the castle at Yverdon in 1261 (Taylor 1985, 23). In June 1250, the sheriff of Sussex was ordered to force those who owed service at Pevensey Castle to perform it. In 1254 royal agents were used to secure contributions to the castle's upkeep. This service of heckage had, by the mid-13th century, been replaced by a money payment, suggesting that the move to the present form of stone castle was underway (Thompson 1997, 216; Fulford and Rippon 2011, 2). In the 1270s, there are the earliest references to the moat, which had been completed in the early 1250s (Colvin 1963, 2, 778; Salzmann 1906, 8; Lyne 2009, 43).

There appear to be three, or perhaps four, distinct stages in the construction of the curtain wall and towers of the medieval castle, though there seems to be considerable superficial homogeneity in the fabric. Creating the castle required the

construction of a circuit of walls running from the c.1193 postern gate clockwise to the east wall of the Roman fortification (Fig. 5). There is a clear joint between the south wall of the castle and the postern gate and another between the south wall and the main gatehouse (Fig. 6). There is no similarly well-defined joint between the north side of the gatehouse and the west wall, although in places there appear to be quoins, suggesting that the west wall may postdate the gatehouse. However, there is a further complication: on the north side of the gatehouse, from moat level upwards, there is a section of fabric that projects out from the surface of the north gatehouse wall. This fabric is incorporated into the gatehouse but is of a slightly cruder quality as if it was a fragment of an earlier structure or an indication of a change of design, the latter perhaps being more plausible due to the neatness of its integration into the building.

Chapman proposed that the lower story of the gatehouse was earlier than the curtain wall, suggesting that it probably dated to the last decade of the 12th century (Chapman 2007, 103; Fulford and Rippon 2011, 3). However, as was discussed earlier, the work of the 1190s seems to have been focused on the postern gate. The west and north walls of the castle appear to derive from a single building campaign with consistent detailing. While the stretch of wall along the south side of the castle seems to be similar to the west and north walls, the quality of its stonework appears to be slightly inferior, and the arrangement for accessing the upper story of the south tower does not appear to have been the same as in the north and east towers, where there was a small vice beside the body of the tower.

These features provide clear evidence for distinct campaigns of work, but how far apart were these phases (Fig. 6)? Various authors have suggested that the main gatehouse may date from the 1190s or c1220 with the current curtain walls following on in the mid-13th century (Peers 1933, 9–10; Goodall 1999, 5–6; Chapman 2007, 113). It is unlikely that such a substantial stone gate would be constructed in splendid isolation within a century-old earthwork and timber palisade unless there was an intention to replace the earthwork fortification, though this programme might have been delayed. If the gatehouse was as early as the 1190s, what would have been the structure of the castle in 1216, when John is said to have dismantled





Fig. 5. The postern gate can be seen at the top left of this view with a section of Roman wall to the left of it. The medieval castle appears to have been built clockwise, beginning with its south side (top), then the main gate on the right-hand side, followed by the west and north walls. On the left-hand side, the remains of the keep and the absent, collapsed section of the east wall of the Roman fort can be seen. [26764/031] © Historic England Archive

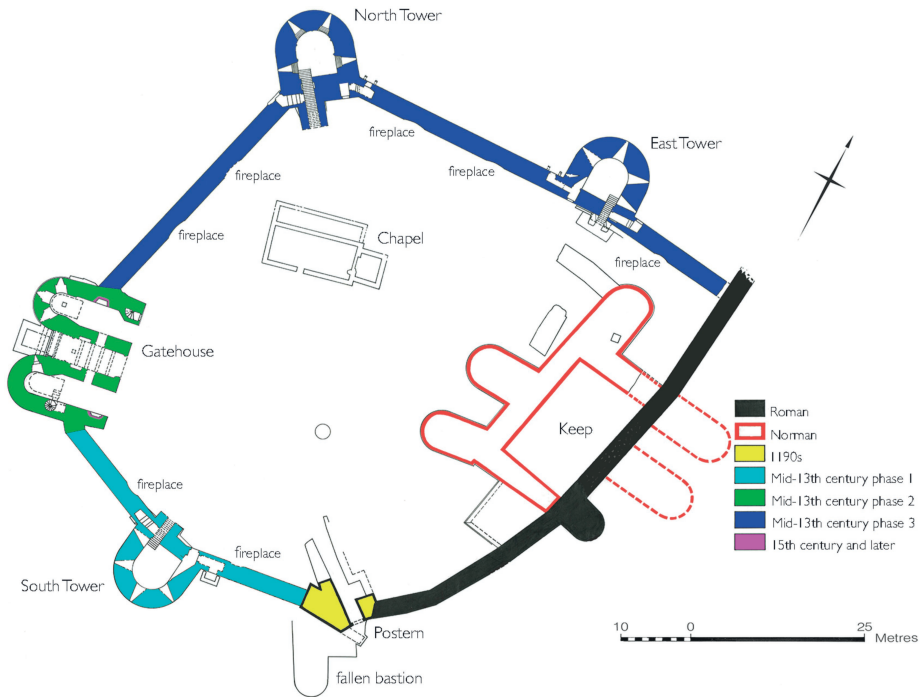


Fig. 6. Phased diagram of the stages in the construction of the medieval castle.

it? Might the apparently better quality of the fabric of the gatehouse, and the consequent appearance of joints between it and the adjacent walls, be due simply to its superior status architecturally? Does the projection from the north face of the gate indicate hesitation or an earlier phase incorporated into the final gate design? Might the superior finish be a result of a later smartening up of the facade?

A gate clearly existed by 1264–5 for the fortification to be able to resist the siege, but in 1288–9, a payment was made: 'For wages of 3 men carrying stones and mortar on to the top of the gate on their backs for lack of windlasses, from Michaelmas to All Saints' Day, four weeks and three days, 9s 0d (being 8d a week each)' (Salzmann 1906, 10). The accounts for the following year record that over 4,000 blocks of stone were acquired, and there was a payment of £17 17s. 8d. to Master Simon the Mason for building the north part of the gate (Salzmann 1906, 12). Interestingly, 4,000 blocks of stone appear to equate roughly with the number of stones required for the facing of the north tower,

each course consisting approximately of 50 blocks (Fig. 7).

At the level of the moat, there is an awkward relationship between the fabric of the gatehouse towers and the stonework of the east side of the base of the bridge. This block looks both to have been inserted between the two turrets of the gatehouse and at the same time cut back to accommodate them. There is a reference in 1274 to the great bridge in front of the castle gate being mended and the drawbridge renewed (Salzmann 1906, 8). Despite being repaired, it appears to have been replaced in the late 1280s but was again in need of repair in 1306 (Salzmann 1906, 10–11, 16–17).

There is a further possibility regarding the arrangements at the gate: archaeological survey has located a low semi-circular mound opposite the gatehouse (b on Fig. 8). This might only be the remains of a spoilheap from clearing out the inner bailey and moat in the 1930s. However, it may represent the footings of a semi-circular barbican similar to those constructed at the Tower of London



Fig. 7. Fortunately, some of the north turret of the gates survives showing Master Simon's work; unfortunately, much of the south turret does not. It is accordingly difficult to ascertain if there was a significant difference between the fabric of the upper parts of the two turrets. [DP236352] © Historic England Archive

and Goodrich Castle from c.1275; both were about 25m across, and the mound at Pevensey is of similar size (Bowden *et al.* 2019, 38–9, 65, fig. 28). There is no convincing support from the small trenches that were excavated in this area in the 1850s and 1930s, though large blocks of masonry seem to have been found in one trench (Lower 1853, 276; Lyne 2009, 47, fig. 14B); so, this suggestion awaits confirmation or dismissal. At some time, probably in the late 13th or early 14th century, the castle's outer bailey was sub-divided by a substantial ditch (c on Fig. 8), with a bank on its east side.

### THE BUILDINGS OF THE MEDIEVAL CASTLE

In 1268 Peter of Savoy died, leaving most of his possessions in England to his niece Queen Eleanor

of Provence, the wife of Henry III. Consequently, records of works at the castle begin to appear in accounts of royal finances. During the reign of Edward I, documents provide greater detail about the buildings of the castle, and most suggest repairs to existing buildings rather than new construction. Around the inside of the medieval curtain wall, there was clearly a series of buildings containing suites of rooms, several of which were heated. There is evidence of two fireplaces in the south wall of the inner bailey, two in the west wall and three in the north wall (Fig. 9). There is an absence of stone walls projecting from the surface of the inner bailey walls, suggesting that the buildings around its perimeter were timber framed. According to the fireplace positions, they were presumably single-storeyed, which would have kept their roof ridges beneath the height of the curtain wall. There is evidence in the

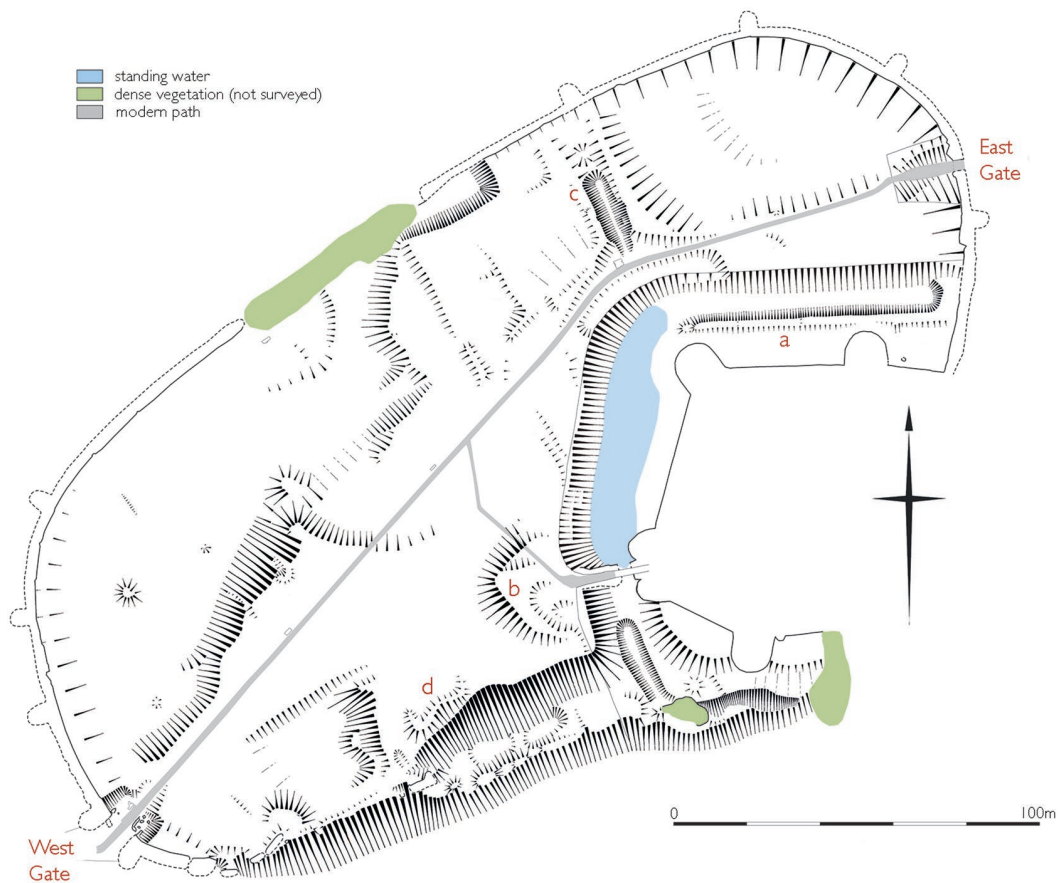


Fig. 8. Archaeological survey plan of the outer bailey compiled by Historic England in 2018.



Fig. 9. One of the fireplace positions in the north wall of the medieval castle; the position of the fireplace is marked by the stonework for the back of the flue and the holes on either side where two corbels formerly supported the hood. [DP236430] © Historic England Archive

documents of thatched and tiled roofs (Salzmann 1906, 8, 10–12, 15, 18, 21–2, 25).

There is no evidence of any projecting stone canopies where fireplaces are located, but flanking each of the fireplace positions are large holes where stone corbels were once located to support timber and plaster hoods. One corbel that may have been associated with a fireplace may survive in the castle's north wall, amongst the plants adorning the wall beside the east tower. This once-common form of fire hood rarely survives in a building of high status, though it can be found in later, lower-status, vernacular houses (Wood 1985, 262). There are also several corbels set high up in the north and west walls, suggesting that there was a wall-walk around at least some of the perimeter of the inner bailey.

The surviving accounts for Pevensey include references to a number of buildings and chambers. Mention is made in the 1270s of stables and a barn, which were presumably in the outer bailey (Salzmann 1906, 7). Unfortunately, archaeological survey has so far been unable to locate these

buildings. There are references to repairs to the Queen's chamber in 1273 and 1275, and in the latter year, work was also carried out to the chapel and the hall (Salzmann 1906, 7–8). In 1276 attention moved on to the north tower, where an upper room (*solar*) was built, and the roofs of the south tower and chapel were mended (*ibid.*). The Queen's Hall was again being repaired in 1277, but thereafter there is a gap of a decade until a more concerted programme of repair and construction began (Salzmann 1906, 8).

In 1288–9, just over £25 was spent, with £43 expended in each of the two following years, and wages were paid to several craftsmen, including stonemasons and carpenters (Salzmann 1906, 9ff). During this first year, extensive masonry repairs were undertaken and work was carried out on the gatehouse, as was mentioned earlier, and carpenters were active preparing posts, beams, planks, etc (*ibid.*, 10). There is also a record of paying the wages of two men to dig stones and cement from under the castle wall that was thrown down at the time of the war.

Salzman presumed this to be a section of the north wall of the Roman fortification, perhaps damaged in the siege of 1264–5 (*ibid.*, 9).

In 1289–90 work, including thatching, was being carried out on the Queen's room; some activity was also taking place on the hall and chapel. At the same time, the Queen's room and chapel were being insulated, and the latter was also plastered (Salzmann 1906, 11). Work was also continuing on the north tower, and there is also mention of the Queen's chamber, though it is unclear whether this is different to the Queen's room. Lead sheets were placed on the western part of the great tower, and other work was carried out on the keep that involved raising joists and work to cover 'the bridge of the great tower' (*ibid.*, 11).

As mentioned earlier, the major activity taking place in 1288–90 appears to have been the construction of the north part of the gate: in addition to the more than 4,000 stones for the gate, a further 42 blocks of Caen stone were acquired, presumably to repair an existing structure, perhaps the keep (Salzmann 1906, 12).

In 1290–1, mention is made of insulating the hall and the Queen's chamber and plastering the latter, as well as thatching its roof (Salzmann 1906, 12). Master Simon, the mason, was still active during the year, carrying out repairs requiring more than 500 blocks of stone, and at least some of the work appears to have been on the keep (*ibid.*, 12–13).

The cessation of this campaign of work coincided with Queen Eleanor's death in 1291 and the transfer of the castle to Edward I but in 1301–2 work resumed. During that first year, just over £11 was spent, followed by a similar amount in 1302–3 and just over £4 in 1303–4. In the first year, repairs were taking place to the hall, 'the chambers annexed to the same', including a solar and the castle wall (Salzmann 1906, 14–15). One of the repairs was to thatch the hall where the covering of tiles was defective, but provision was also made to employ a tiler to lay 6,000 tiles on the hall roof (*ibid.*, 15).

The omission of the qualification 'Queen's' in the 1301 document may simply be a recognition of the site now being held by the king, though royal houses often had king's and queen's sides or separate storeys in the case of the Great Tower at Dover Castle. The presence of seven fireplaces around the interior of the curtain wall of the inner bailey may suggest that some version of this type of duplication existed. As well as at least one hall,

there were presumably several adjacent chambers, including one described as a solar, which seems to have been within the north tower.

The castle also had a chapel. Arnold Taylor has suggested that this chapel may date from before 1066 and that the simple footings in the centre of the castle may be remnants of this building (Taylor 1985, 238–40) (Fig. 10). As mentioned earlier, Peter of Savoy was granted permission by Richard de Wyche, Bishop of Chichester (1245–1253), to move the chapel built near the keep of Pevensey to another suitable site (Peers 1933, 6). The townspeople of Pevensey may have once used this chapel until the creation of the nearby parish church of St Nicholas in the early 13th century. The suggested pre-conquest chapel, said to have been near the keep, perhaps lay to the north, nearer the gate of the Roman fortification and in the way of the castle's development. A chapel is mentioned in 1275, 1276 and again in 1289–90; however, references suggest that this was a building or a room close to the hall or Queen's hall. This is confirmed by the 1306 survey of the fabric of the castle, which mentions repairs required to 'the Queen's chamber with a chapel and other chambers annexed' (Salzmann 1906, 17). However, in 1302, financial records itemise the materials, procedures and workforce employed to create a new timber-framed chapel (*ibid.*, 15). It is plausible that the footings for the chapel in the centre of the castle were associated with this project.

In 1302 lead was obtained to repair the roof of the great tower and the tower of the granary (Salzmann 1906, 15–16). Work on the great tower continued in 1303 and included a reference to removing 'all the lead over the kitchen in the great tower' to allow the replacement of joists (*ibid.*, 16). It is unlikely that the kitchen would be on the top floor of a keep, and therefore this is probably referring to a single-storeyed attachment to the keep, thus perhaps explaining the description of being 'in the great tower'. In 1303 the woodwork of the gate of the outer bailey of the castle was rebuilt, and money was set aside for 'repairing a piece of the wall of the inner ward of the castle towards the town of Pevensey which had fallen' (*ibid.*), presumably the section of the Roman curtain wall between the keep and the moat to the north of the medieval castle, which is absent today. The quantities of lime and sand purchased suggest that a shorter stretch of wall was concerned but nevertheless indicate that the collapse of this section was underway. By 1318 the



Fig. 10. In the centre of the medieval castle are footings for what may have been the small timber-framed chapel mentioned in 1302, rather than the ancient chapel moved to allow the construction of the castle. [DP236360] © Historic England Archive

breach was said to be 40 feet (12.2m) long, implying that the situation had worsened in just over a decade (*ibid.*, 18) (Fig. 1).

#### EPILOGUE – THE DECLINE OF THE CASTLE

The repair programmes of the late 13th century and the first years of the 14th century were clearly insufficient to return the castle to good condition, as in 1306 it was described as being ruinous, and John Abel was ordered to survey it (Salzmann 1906, 16). Access to the castle was impeded because the bridge across the moat was broken down, and its timber had been sold off. Abel then went on to list an extensive set of issues. The barn in the outer bailey had collapsed and its timber burnt, while the pigeon house had also suffered damage (*ibid.*, 18). In the inner bailey, the hall with attached bed-chambers required repairs in 1306 and ‘the Queen’s chamber with a chapel and other chambers annexed’ also needed repair (*ibid.*, 17). This work was estimated to

cost £20, but Abel expected repairs to the keep and four towers to cost an eye-watering £1,000.

Nothing appears to have happened in the aftermath of the 1306 report, and another was commissioned in 1318, suggesting that the castle was indefensible (Salzmann 1906, 18). The roof of the north tower had collapsed and fallen through the floors beneath; this was presumably where the solar had been created in the 1270s. The breach in the east wall of the Roman fortification beside the keep seems to have worsened, and many of the inner bailey walls lacked crenelations. A gap of 16 perches (80.5m) existed in the Roman south wall, and the hole in the north wall of the same fortification is also mentioned. To repair and reinstate the outer bailey walls was estimated to require a further £1,000 of expenditure. In the aftermath of this report, only a modest sum of money was earmarked for repairs, but Edward II nevertheless stayed at Pevensey between 30 August and 1 September 1324 (*ibid.*, 19). It has been suggested that the keep was radically altered in about 1325, when its eastern

bastions fell down, along with a substantial section of the adjacent Roman wall, and were replaced by two new towers; this construction work would have entailed demolishing much of the upper part of the keep (Goodall 1999, 8) (Fig. 5). The dating evidence for this is uncertain; it would be surprising if such a major piece of work was not mentioned in the records at this time, which only specify that the castle was being provisioned (Salzmann 1906, 19). Eighty years later, there appears to be a reference to a very similar programme of work (Salzmann 1906, 23–4), which is perhaps more likely to reflect the date of this reconstruction.

A costing for works made in 1370 included repairs to 'the great bridge in the Castle' and 'another bridge before the door of the keep, and of a great *steghere* there entirely broken up, and of the great gate of the castle, and for the roofing of the buildings there' (Salzmann 1906, 20). The 'steghere' was translated by Salzman as (? stairway), presumably the same structure as, or an element of 'the bridge of the great tower' mentioned in 1289–90 (*ibid.*, 11). One of the stone towers of the keep also required repairs, presumably one of the large projecting bastions; the cost of this work appears to have been just over £41 (*ibid.*, 21). Nevertheless, the parlous state of the buildings at the beginning of the 14th century had probably worsened.

In 1331, the honour of Pevensey was bestowed on Queen Philippa, the wife of Edward III, as part of her dower, and the queen obtained a lease of the castle for life. Three years after her death in 1369, the castle and honour were granted to John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster (Colvin 1963, 2, 779). When faced with a possible French attack in 1377, he decided to leave the castle undefended (Salzmann 1906, 22). The constable of the castle, Sir John Pelham, supported John of Gaunt's son Henry Bolingbroke when he usurped the English Crown from Richard II in 1399, meaning that the increasingly decrepit castle was besieged but not taken (Goodall 1999, 26). Evidently, its poor state of repair did not prevent it from providing a defensible structure, but in 1405 Pelham wrote to the Privy Council stating that a great part of the keep was falling down, and in 1408 money was spent on repairing 'the stone bridge at the great gate of the Castle', part of the keep and 'a certain tower called Dameydeynestor' (Salzmann 1906, 23). Might the reference to the dangerous state of the keep have been the prelude to the collapse previously dated to around 1325 (Goodall 1999,

8)? There is also a reference to making a repair to 'a certain new wall between the keep and the gateway' (Salzmann 1906, 24). There is no evidence of such a wall in the inner bailey, but if 'the gateway' was not the castle's main gate but rather the east gate of the Roman fortification, this may indicate continuing concern about the collapsing Roman wall beside the keep.

Pevensey Castle had served as a gaol at least since the late 12th century and in the 15th century hosted royal and aristocratic prisoners. In 1405, Edward, Duke of York, was confined there, while James I of Scotland arrived in the following year. Joan of Navarre was imprisoned there from 15 December 1419 to 8 March 1420 (Salzmann 1906, 24; Horrox 2004; Jones 2014). However, an inquiry in 1420 showed that the upper chamber (*solarium*) of the chapel in the keep (*le Dongeon*) was ruinous, and the wooden bridge in front of the keep was in a state of disrepair (Salzmann 1906, 24–5). In 1440 repairs to the lead work of the castle's roofs were authorised, and three years later £7 17s. 3d. was spent on the repair of 'a tower called *le Dongeon*', the chapel, royal hall, kitchen, stable and other buildings' (Salzmann 1906, 25–6). Further small repairs were authorised over the next 20 years, but it is clear that this was simply tinkering with increasingly run-down and little-used buildings. Nevertheless, on the ground floor of the main gate into the inner bailey, there is physical evidence that the rooms on the east side of the north and south turrets were both provided with fireplaces, possibly in the late 15th or 16th century.

In 1548 Pevensey Castle was still nominally a fortification, and in 1573 a survey was conducted to consider whether the building was worthy of repair (Salzmann 1906, 26–7). The commissioners stated that the castle was 'far in decay and of no force' and would cost at least £2000 to repair; the materials were worth £258 7s. 0d. They found that in 1558 large quantities of materials had been taken for the repair of Herstmonceux Castle and Priesthawes House in Westham, and it is clear that the site continued to be treated as a quarry. The shape of the moat as it existed in the 19th century, as seen in the 1875 Ordnance Survey map, explains the pattern of robbed stonework on the outer face of the castle. The fine ashlar of the lower courses of the curtain wall survives on the west side of the castle and on part of the north tower. Thereafter, the east face of the tower and the north side of the curtain wall have had their lower courses robbed. Their survival on

the west side was due to the moat preventing easy access to remove the ashlar blocks.

Inside the inner bailey, an earthen mound covered the keep; this mound, depicted in an 18th-century engraving and removed without record during the early 20th century, has been said to have been part of the preparations to resist the onslaught of the Spanish Armada (Saunders 1989, 62; Fulford and Rippon 2011, 6). An earthwork gun battery was created on the south side of the outer bailey (d on Fig. 8), and its form appears to be appropriate for this period, but it is possible that the mound covering the keep was also used as a gun platform. A survey was carried out in 1591, which again painted a picture of a very dilapidated structure uneconomical to repair (Salzmann 1906, 30). Pevensey seems to have played no part in the Civil Wars of the 1640s, and in 1653, the 'Water Poet' John Taylor wrote that:

At Pevensey doth a ruin'd Castle stand  
And there the Norman Conqueror did land  
(Caldecott 1940, 27).

During the 18th and 19th centuries, the romantic ruin attracted many antiquaries and artists (Fig. 11). Among the dozens of published images was a bird's eye view based on a watercolour by Samuel Grimm (1733–94), which shows the earth mound covering the keep.

The castle's military history did not end with the Spanish Armada. In 1940, Pevensey was once more a potential landing place for an invasion (Goodall 1999, 28). A command and observation post was set up in the castle, the perimeter defences were refortified with pillboxes for machine-gun posts, and a blockhouse for anti-tank weapons was constructed in the mouth of the Roman west gate. Concrete anti-tank cubes were placed to cover the gap in the Roman southern wall (Bowden *et al.* 2019, 48–53). Two 5½ inch naval guns manned by 237 Coast Battery were in place by 1941 (Goodwin 1994, 23–4; Maurice-Jones 2005, 232). The towers of the inner bailey were refitted to create barracks for its garrison, which included Home Guard, British, Canadian and US Army Air Corps units (Fig. 12). The castle was returned to the Ministry's control in 1945. It was decided to leave most of the recently constructed military installations in place to illustrate this important phase in the castle's history. Visitors to this intriguing English Heritage property today are fortunate to enjoy almost two millennia of military defences, an experience unrivalled anywhere else in England.

THE NORTH-EAST VIEW OF PEVENSEY-CASTLE, IN THE COUNTY OF SUSSEX.

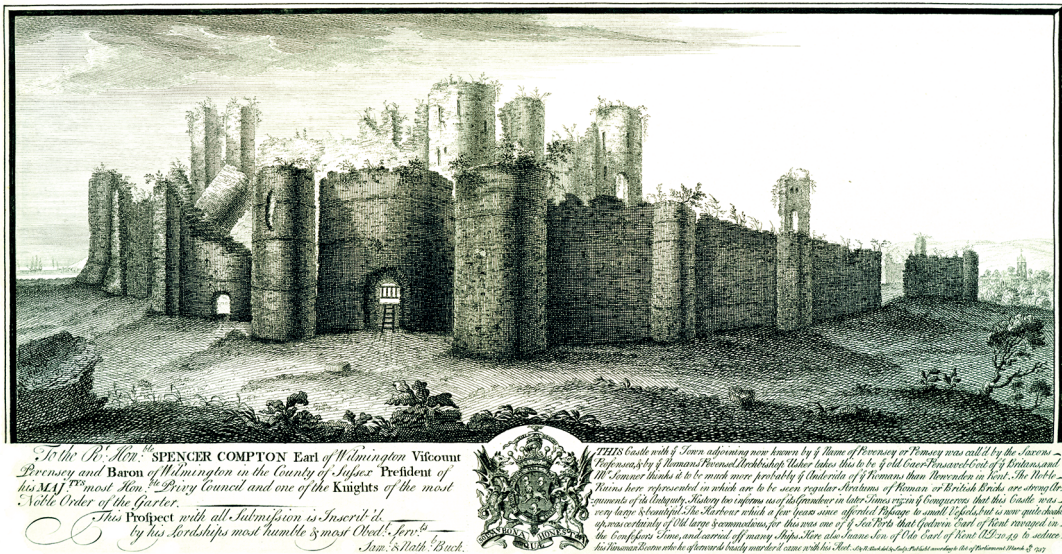


Fig. 11. This engraving of 1737 by Samuel and Nathaniel Buck depicts Pevensey Castle, with the east gate of the Roman fort in the foreground and the medieval castle and the large earth mound over the base of the keep behind. [PLB\_N070820] © Historic England Archive



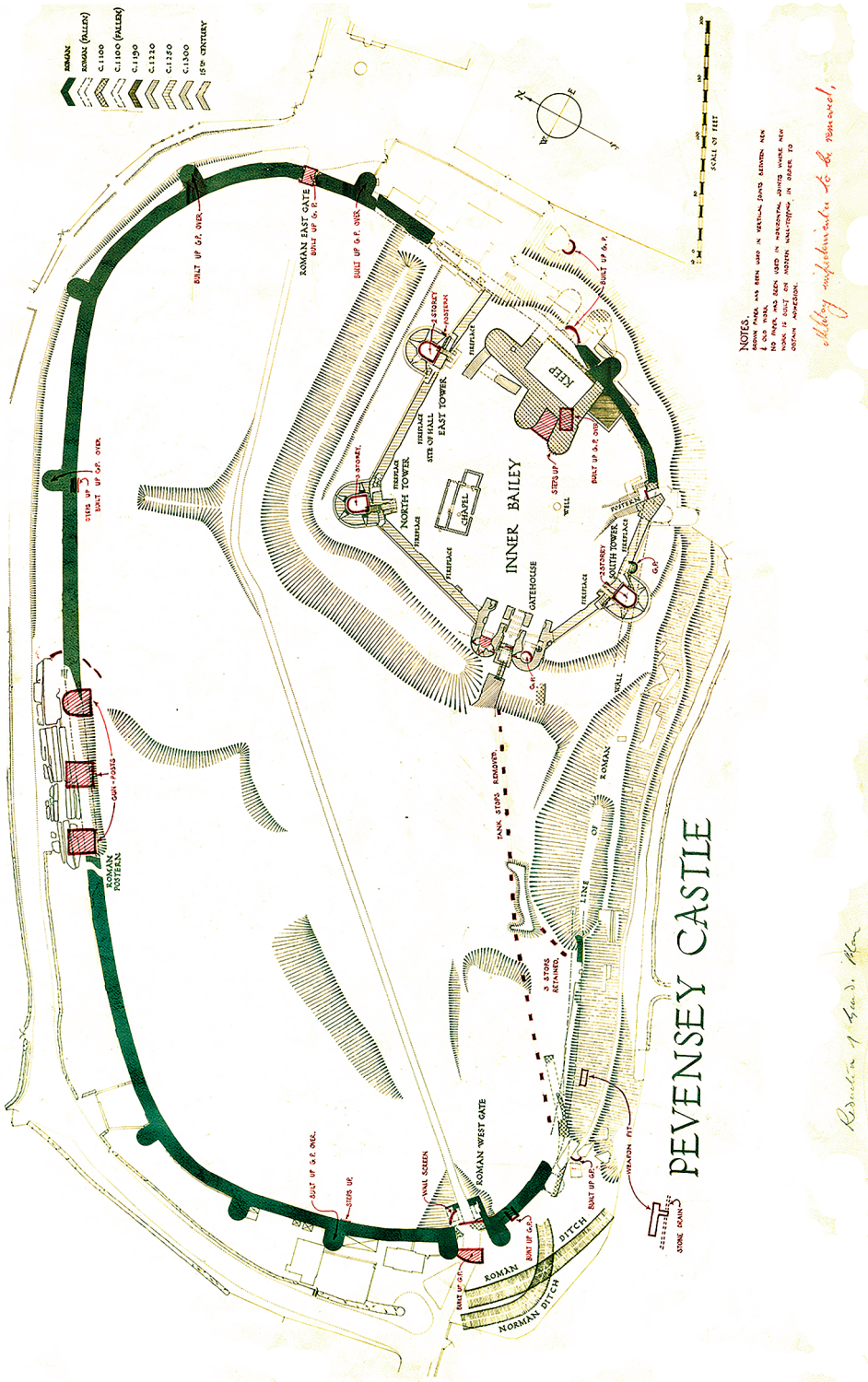


Fig. 12. To blend the new work in with the old, but also to camouflage the new additions, the Second World War alterations were supervised by the Ministry of Works, who recorded the interventions on a plan of the castle and how they would be removed. [Historic England Archive MP/PEV0037] © Historic England Archive

### Acknowledgements

This paper is based on a survey and investigation carried out in 2018 by Historic England. The authors would like to record our thanks for their contribution to that work to our colleagues Steven Baker, Dr Olaf Bayer, Damian Grady and Fiona Small. Our colleagues in Historic England's Archive Lucinda Walker

and Javis Gurr kindly provided and licensed the images we have used. We also benefited greatly from the support of Roy Porter of English Heritage and the staff at Pevensey Castle, Janet Taylor and Philip Savins. Thanks are also due to Krysia Truscoe of Reading University, who assisted with the archaeological survey.

**Authors:** Allan Brodie, Rose Cottage, Stanley, Chippenham, Wiltshire, SN15 3RG; allanbrodiehistory@gmail.com and Mark Bowden, Briar Bank, Coronation Road, Stroud, Gloucestershire GL5 3SL; markbowden.archaeology@gmail.com

### BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bowden, M., Brodie, A. and Small, F.** 2019. *Pevensey Castle, Pevensey, East Sussex: architectural, archaeological and aerial investigation*. Historic England: Research Report Series no. 39/2019.
- Bowden, M. and Brodie, A.** forthcoming. 'Ad Pevensae: Pevensey Castle and the Norman Conquest'.
- Caldecott, J. B.** 1940. John Taylor's Tour of Sussex in 1653, *Sussex Archaeological Collections* (hereafter SAC) **81**, 19–30.
- Carpenter, D.** 2020. *Henry III: the rise to power and personal rule, 1207–1258*. London: Yale University Press.
- Chapman, A.** 2007. The gatehouse of Pevensey Castle, SAC **145**, 97–118.
- Colvin, H. M.** 1963. *The History of the King's Works 1 & 2*. London: HMSO.
- Combes, P. and Lyne, M.** 1995. Hastings, Haestingaceaster and Haestingaport, SAC **133**, 213–24.
- Creighton, O. H.** 2005. *Castles and landscapes: power, community and fortification in medieval England*. London: Equinox.
- Davison, B. K.** 1967. Three eleventh-century earthworks in England: their excavation and implications, *Chateau Gaillard* **2**, 39–48.
- Flanagan, M. T.** 2004. Richard fitz Gilbert de Clare, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/5447> accessed 15 June 2020).
- Fulford, M. and Tyers, I.** 1995. The date of Pevensey and the defence of an 'Imperium Britanniarum', *Antiquity* **69**, 1009–14.
- Fulford, M. G. and Rippon, S.** 2011. *Pevensey Castle, Sussex: excavations in the Roman fort and medieval keep, 1993–95*. Salisbury: University of Reading/Wessex Archaeology report **26**.
- Garmonsway, G. N.** 1986. *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. London: Dent, Everyman's Library.
- Goodall, J.** 1999. *Pevensey Castle*. London: English Heritage.
- Goodwin, J. E.** 1994. *Fortification of the South Coast: the Pevensey, Eastbourne and Newhaven Defences 1750–1945*. Worthing: J. E. Goodwin.
- Harvey, J.** 1987. *English Mediaeval Architects: a biographical dictionary down to 1550*. Gloucester: Alan Sutton.
- Haslam, J.** 2021. The location of the burh of haestingaceastre of the Burghal Hidage, SAC **159**, 97–112.
- Higham, R. and Barker, P.** 1992. *Timber Castles*. London: Batsford.
- Horrox, R.** 2004. Edward, second Duke of York, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/22356> (accessed 3 June 2020)).
- Jones, M.** 2014. Joan of Navarre, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/14824> (accessed 3 June 2020)).
- Lawson, M. K.** 2003. *The Battle of Hastings 1066*. Stroud: Tempus.
- Lower, M. A.** 1853. On Pevensey Castle and recent excavations there, SAC **6**, 265–82.
- Lyne, M.** 2009. *Excavations at Pevensey Castle 1936 to 1964*. British Archaeological Reports **503**, Oxford: Archaeopress.
- Maurice-Jones, K. W.** 2005. *The History of Coastal Artillery in the British Army*. Uckfield: Naval & Military Press.
- Pearson, A.** 2002. *The Roman Shore Forts*. Stroud: Tempus.
- Peers, C.** 1933. Pevensey Castle, SAC **74**, 1–15.
- Phillipotts, C.** 2008. *Dover Castle Great Tower: Revised Documentary Research Report*. Unpublished report, Properties Presentation Department, English Heritage.
- Renn, D. F.** 1960. The Anglo-Norman Keep, 1066–1138, *Journal of the British Archaeological Association* **23**, 1–22.  
— — 1971. The turris de Penuesel: a reappraisal and a theory, SAC **109**, 55–64.  
— — 2015. The Turris de Penuesel: a final note, SAC **153**, 208–10.
- Salzmann, L. F.** 1906. Documents relating to Pevensey Castle, SAC **49**, 1–30.
- Saunders, A.** 1989. *Fortress Britain: artillery fortification in the British Isles and Ireland*. Liphook: Beaufort.
- Suetonius, Tranquillus, G.** 1913. *Lives of the Twelve Caesars*. Loeb Classical Library. London: Heinemann.
- Taylor, A.** 1985. *Studies in Castles and Castle-building*. London: Hambledon Press.
- Thompson, K.** 1995. The Lords of Laigle: ambition and insecurity on the borders of Normandy, *Anglo-Norman Studies* **18**, 176–99.  
— — 1997. Lords, castellans, constables and dowagers: the Rape of Pevensey from the 11th to the 13th century, SAC **135**, 209–20.
- Thompson, M. W.** 1991. *The Rise of the Castle*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Wace** 1837. *His Chronicle of the Norman Conquest from the Roman De Rou*. translated by E. Taylor, London: William Pickering.
- Wheatley, A.** 2004. *The Idea of the Castle in Medieval England*. Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer.
- William of Malmesbury** 1848. *William of Malmesbury's Chronicle of the Kings of England*, ed. by J.A. Giles. London: Henry G Bohn.
- Wood, M.** 1985. *The English Mediaeval House*. London: Bracken Books.