Medieval Archaeology, 50, 2006

Space and Structure at Caernarfon Castle

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THE STUDY of High-medieval castles has benefited from the incorporation of elements of landscape archaeology in the last few years. While this paper is far from a complete study of the late 13th-century castle of Caernarfon and its relationship with its surrounding landscape, it aims to stimulate interest in this avenue of archaeological research. By focusing on the subtle relationships between the castle, the adjoining walled town and their ecclesiastical foci, and considering them in relation to the other Edwardian castles in Wales, the benefits of these approaches will be evident.

To consider Caernarfon Castle (Gwynedd) as an explicit statement of royal power in the late 13th century is far from innovative. It is a familiar and well-studied structure, known for its appropriation of imperial imagery in the form of its banded masonry that apes the Roman architecture of Constantinople and York's multi-angular tower, and the stone eagles that crest its largest tower. Built between 1283 and 1330, when construction was abandoned, it stood directly on the site of its Norman predecessor. The earth motte of the earlier motte-and-bailey castle was incorporated into the upper, eastern ward of the Edwardian castle. The Norman colony had been short-lived, but continued as a royal Welsh settlement until the final capitulation of the principality and the beginning of English rule in 1283.

Caernarfon was built with castles at Conwy (Conwy) and Harlech (Gwynedd) in the aftermath of the second Welsh war of Edward I in 1282–3, along the coastal districts of N. and W. Wales. He raised less monumental fortifications at this time, supplementing the castles that had been built following the first Welsh war of 1276–7. Rhuddlan (Denbighshire) and Flint (Flintshire) are the most well known examples of this earlier phase of construction. Standing on a stretch of land between the Seiont and Cadnant rivers as they enter the Menai Strait between Anglesey and the mainland, today we see Caernarfon Castle as a particularly interesting example of High-medieval architecture. Grand polygonal towers and massive defensive elements, particularly the King's Gate and the N. and S. curtain faces, punctuate its large curtain wall. We justifiably see it to be a significant structure among the wider group of castles built in this region during the later 13th century. Together the incomplete castle and its town walls cost in the region of £19,900 and drew on a workforce from across England.[1]

[1] T. McNeill, *Castles* (London, 1992), 43.

 DOI: 10.1179/174581706x124194

I aim here to add to this understanding of Caernarfon Castle by focusing on the relationship between the castle and its immediate surroundings, particularly the associated town and ecclesiastical elements. Through an examination of space and structure, I will argue that we can discern subtle and interesting arrangements in these structures that have hitherto not been discussed and which I believe can add a completely new layer of interest to an already lively area of debate.

CHURCH AND CASTLE

We can see the physical omnipotence of castle and church in many urban landscapes throughout High-medieval England. Interestingly, at Caernarfon it is possible to develop the idea that there was an intentional motivation in their spatial arrangement. Despite royal financial investment in the settlement as the site of a new palatial castle, an extensive town wall that housed the exchequer in its gatehouse (Fig. 1), a stone-built quay and eventually a courthouse, nothing was provided for the spiritual needs of the borough's inhabitants. It was only in 1303 that Edward of Caernarfon, the future Edward II, granted Henry of Ellerton a licence to build a chantry chapel on his burgage plot within the town.[2]

Therefore, for the first twenty years of the borough's existence, the church at Llanbeblig (Gwynedd), dedicated to St Peblig, served the parochial needs of its inhabitants, until the founding of Ellerton's chapel of St Mary. The church of Llanbeblig, of which St Mary's was a chapel of ease, was not situated at

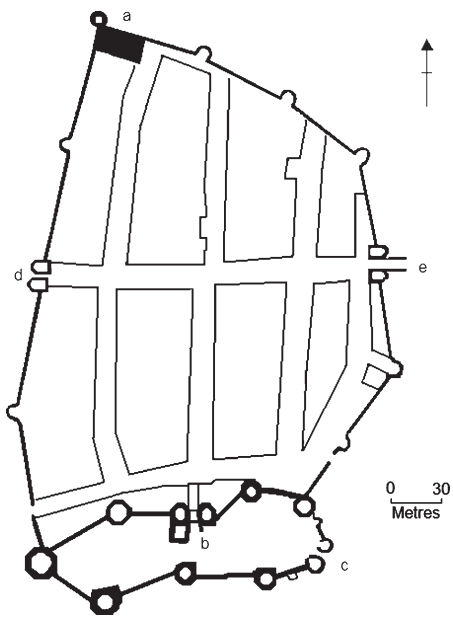

FIG. 1
CAERNARFON CASTLE AND TOWN WALLS. a. Chapel of St Mary. b. The King's Gate. c. The Queen's Gate leading out to the site of the old Norman bailey. d. The West Gate. e. The East (Exchequer) Gate. *Digital reproduction from Taylor, op. cit. in note 2.*

[2] A. J. Taylor, *Caernarfon Castle and Town Walls* (Cardiff, 2004), 43.

Caernarfon itself, but at its Roman forerunner of Segontium some distance away. Although this church was of great antiquity, supposedly being a centre of Christian worship since the 5th century, its location would have been somewhat inconvenient to the inhabitants of the new settlement. If Caernarfon is to be seen as the royal masterpiece of Edward I in his newly acquired territories, then it is interesting that a grand and prestigious ecclesiastical focus was not at the very least attempted, even if left incomplete or rapidly allowed to decay, like so much of the Edwardian architecture.

At first glance, it would appear that efforts were made for religious provisions. In the castle itself there are at least four chapels and, although delayed — perhaps due to the urgency of work on the castle and town walls — a chapel was finally erected within the urban perimeter.[3] However, if we first take the castle chapels we may see that all is not quite as it may seem. Firstly, apart from the chapel above the King's Gate (Fig. 2), it is notable that these chapels are all relatively compact affairs, and were unlikely to provide for anything more than a small, private audience, most likely the most prominent members of the castle's household. Worthy of note also is that the ecclesiastical authority in theory licensed all private chapels, including those housed within a castle. In practice no licence was ever sought or granted at Caernarfon and therefore these chapels theoretically stood beyond the jurisdiction of the Church within this structure of royal power, a stand against ecclesiastical interference in castle chapels that Edward I appears to have also taken at royal castles in England.[4]

There is also an interesting relationship in play at the largest of the castle chapels, which stands above the King's Gate. Here a double *piscine* is the most

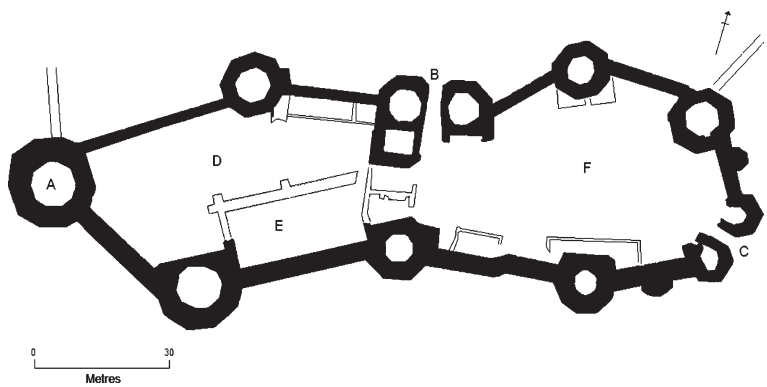

FIG. 2

CAERNARFON CASTLE.
A. The Eagle Tower. B. The King's Gate. C. The Queen's Gate. D. The Lower Ward. E. The Great Hall. F. The Upper Ward, where the earlier Norman motte stood until it was removed in the late 19th century. *Digital reproduction from Taylor, op. cit. in note 2.*

[3] J. R. Kenyon, *Medieval Fortifications* (Leicester, 1990), 151.
[4] N. J. G. Pounds, *The Medieval Castle in England and Wales: A Social and Political History* (Cambridge, 1990), 13; D. S. Bachrach, 'The organisation of military religion in the armies of King Edward I of England (1272–1307)', *J. Medieval Hist.*, 29 (2003), 265–86, at p. 279.

obvious evidence of the room's function, although this has not prevented its interpretation being questioned by Mathieu in his application of spatial analysis to the Edwardian castles.[5] However, this scepticism was not bolstered by a feasible alternative for the room's function. Given that a similar layout exists at Harlech where the chapel is again housed centrally above the gatehouse, it seems doubtful that the room at Caernarfon can be anything but a chapel.[6]

It would appear, then, that within the castle walls it was this room that provided something approaching a more 'communal' place of everyday worship for the castle's household. And yet this room was not only a chapel but also held a more utilitarian function. Its position above the King's Gate also meant that it provided a recess into which one of the gateway's two portcullises could be raised.[7] If the gate was open it was unlikely that the chapel above would be usable. Thus the ability of the chapel to operate was entirely at the mercy of the workings of the King's Gate itself. Even when the gateway was closed, and the chapel was free to operate, the mechanics of this operation — the chains, ropes, openings and recess by which the portcullis would be raised — would be openly on display and somewhat in conflict with the aesthetics we normally expect of a chapel.

The size and extent of the castle as a whole would suggest there would be no immediate limitation in space, yet they chose this position for the largest chapel despite the hindrance that the operation of portcullis would have on its ability to function. Harlech in fact had two chapels centrally on the first and second storeys of the gatehouse. The lower housed the portcullis when raised, increasing the likelihood that Caernarfon's builders consciously chose this design. This discrete chapel at Caernarfon is very different from other examples of chapels above gatehouses which appear to consciously celebrate the combination of church and symbolic entrance, as at Warwick (Warwickshire).[8] It may be that this design was mirroring castles in the Holy Land where Edward I had spent some time on crusade before succeeding to the throne. There chapels were contained above gateways and occasionally housed shrines in a symbolic gesture that continued Roman tradition.[9]

However, I suggest that this is highly illustrative of an exertion of royal power over the church, particularly if we draw back and remember the castle chapels do not have ecclesiastical licences. Here, we see that the most visible of those chapels was entirely subservient to royal will because it was also the means of granting of access through the King's Gate. This statement, played out through space and structure, was completed in 1321 when a statue of Edward II was erected above the external entrance of the King's Gate.[10] While this play on

[5] J. R. Mathieu, 'New methods on old castles: generating new ways of seeing', *Medieval Archaeol.*, 43 (1999), 115–42, at pp. 123–4.
[6] A. J. Taylor, *Harlech Castle* (Cardiff, 2002), 20–4.
[7] Taylor, op. cit. in note 2, 23.
[8] O. Creighton and R. Higham, *Medieval Town Walls: An Archaeology and Social History of Urban Defence* (Stroud, 2005), 176.
[9] Denys Pringle, pers. comm.
[10] Taylor, op. cit. in note 2, 38.

the title of the King's Gate may be a little too clumsy, it becomes more plausible if we consider the wider relationships at Caernarfon and the other Edwardian castles.

THE CASTLE GATEWAY

This argument rests in part on how we understand the way in which people moved through the castle, or at least, how people were intended to move through the castle, given its unfinished condition. For this discussion, the most important question is which of the castle entrances they used as the principal access point, or were both in use concurrently but for different groups and individuals?

At first it would appear that both the King's Gate and the Queen's Gate served distinct but straightforward purposes. The King's Gate provided the most convenient access between the castle and the walled borough and was therefore likely to be frequently in use. If we follow Taylor's official reconstruction of the castle layout, then it could have provided access to both wards, but visitors were consciously directed to the lower, western ward. The Queen's Gate, in contrast, was directly accessible without having to first enter the town walls. It led into the upper, eastern ward.

Before I consider the different uses of the two wards, I wish to examine the differences between the gatehouses themselves. The King's Gate is one of Caernarfon's most distinct and celebrated elements. Due to the scale of its defence it has been viewed as a grand culmination of design in High-medieval castle building. From its initial ditch and drawbridge, a total of five doors, six portcullises and yet another drawbridge would have to be crossed before the lower ward could finally be reached. Within its passageway existed at least nine 'murder-holes'. The slightly inverted curtain walls flanking the gatehouse provided double, and even triple, tiers of firing positions towards the approach road — described as one of the most intensive concentrations of firepower in High-medieval Europe.[11] This in part stems from the fact that it could utilise the largest number of firing positions with a minimum of archers.[12]

This immense display of strength contrasts sharply with the Queen's Gate, accessed directly from outside the urban perimeter, through the remnants of the old Norman castle bailey. With its raised position, resulting from the incorporation of the Norman motte into the upper ward, the gate is today inaccessible from outside. Originally it would presumably have been reached by way of a stone-built ramp, as at the outer gateway at Conwy Castle, although no definite evidence survives for this structure at the Caernarfon. The gateway itself was a much simpler affair, again comprising of two large flanking towers. However, its defences are comparatively poorly protected, having only a single doorway and portcullis. Although the gateway remains incomplete, it was unlikely to have been provided with a longer passageway with more barriers. This is because

[11] R. A. Brown, *English Castles* (London, 1976), 101.
[12] McNeill, op. cit. in note 1, 96.

incorporation of the Norman motte into the upper ward would have taken up much of the room inside and seriously limited building space (the motte was removed in the 19th century as part of the castle's early restoration).[13]

In contrast to the King's Gate where a powerful curtain wall brimming with arrow slits flanked the passage, the curtain wall at the Queen's Gate actually recedes back from the gatehouse. If we are to speak of 'medieval firepower' or fields of fire, then it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the Queen's Gate was completely lacking in comparison with the King's Gate. If we take the town circuit to have provided a form of outwork, or initial line of defence, then here too the Queen's Gate was in a more vulnerable position. Castle Square, at the foot of the Queen's Gate and on the probable site of the original Norman bailey, was sometimes referred to as the Prince's Garden.[14] This suggests that Queen's Gate may have formerly overlooked a High-medieval garden, as has been noted at the 'private' East Gate of its contemporary at Conwy Castle.[15] The addition of this aesthetic feature, in combination with the lower number of barriers at the Queen's Gate, creates surprising defensive disparities within the castle. While at the King's Gate we have a famous example at the pinnacle of High-medieval military architecture, at the Queen's Gate, although undoubtedly strong, we have by contrast a much more vulnerable gateway.

We cannot ignore that an important factor in this discrepancy may be the political context in which they built the gatehouses. The King's Gate was constructed in the aftermath of Madog ap Llywelyn's rebellion in 1294 during which the settlement and construction site at Caernarfon were attacked and heavily damaged. The King's Gate may be the reaction of Edward I and his architects to this traumatic episode. Yet, the Queen's Gate was still incomplete at this stage (and does not seem to have ever been completed to plan) but they did not take the opportunity to reinforce it, suggesting that a more specific statement was being made at the King's Gate.

Returning to the important question of access, we are left with something of a conundrum in that it is difficult to be sure which of the gates provided the principal point of access. The massive number of doors and portcullises at the King's Gate would have made its use inconvenient, and retarded the use of the (perhaps symbolically positioned) chapel above. Yet the use of the Queen's Gate as the principal entrance would have been highly inconvenient for anyone moving between the castle and town given that its use meant exiting the castle or town walls altogether.

For Taylor, the enormity of the King's Gate defences was a testament to the fact that the main gate of the castle was rarely open and even then only briefly.[16] In part, dispensing of various administrative functions within the borough walls rather than in the castle may have reduced the need for movement between the castle and borough. The eastern landward gatehouse of the town

[13] Taylor, op. cit. in note 2, 7.
[14] H. M. Colvin (ed.), *History of the King's Works, Vol. 1: The Middle Ages* (London, 1963), 380.
[15] A. J. Taylor, *Conwy Castle and Town Walls* (Cardiff, 2004), 35.
[16] Taylor, op. cit. in note 2, 23.

walls housed the exchequers for the new Edwardian shires of NW. Wales. These provided the financial and administrative heart of the newly conquered region.[17] In addition to this, the shire hall was built in the SW. corner of the borough, again holding many of the judicial requirements that in many other towns would have taken place within the castle walls themselves.

However, it is difficult to believe that the King's Gate did not provide a common thoroughfare between the castle and borough. I believe it likely that most of the doors and portcullises of that entrance were regularly left open for the everyday movements of the castle and borough inhabitants, and that its massive display of strength was used in a more ceremonial role. Unlike the Queen's Gate, its approach, having already passed through a first line of defence at either of the town wall gatehouses, revealed one of the castle's widest facades, and thus from ground level gave the impression of a castle of an even grander scale. In this sense, more esteemed visitors and guests to the castle would have had the massive strength of the royal household demonstrated to them through the rolling back of these layers of defence, particularly in the opening of the numerous doors and portcullises in the King's Gate. These simultaneously demonstrated the royal grace that had allowed their entrance but which could equally repel them with ease. Part-way through the passage were two porters offices, one on either side, from which members of the castles household could finally receive the guests allowed this far. Associated with this demonstrative passageway, the king's political hegemony was also realised in the chapel above, where its ability to function was again entirely at the mercy of royal grace and will.

Equally, the Queen's Gate was in no sense a low-key entrance. It was the intention to see those entering, although I would suggest that it was intended as a much more private entrance for members of the castle household. With its prominent, raised position at the eastern end of the castle, the gatehouse is far from subtle. If we assume there was a possibility that some form of garden lay before it in the remnants of the Norman bailey, then movement towards this entrance would have taken on a formal and sophisticated air and would have starkly contrasted with the more 'public' King's Gate. Conversely, the old Norman bailey is also thought to be the site of Caernarfon's extra-mural market, where the inaccessibility of the Queen's Gate to all but those granted permission to enter by those holding the castle would have been just as stark. In fact, the distinction may have been made even more prominent in front of this regular public meeting place because of the presence of Welsh merchants.[18] In addition, movement up the presumed stone ramp into the gateway would have created a particularly potent performance of social differentiation. It emphasised the difference in standing between the royal household and the wider community through the 'ascension' of those privileged individuals. This entrance was built to be both visually powerful and yet ultimately private (as the status received from this privacy was to be seen by all others). Hence the gateway had so few

[17] Ibid., 43.
[18] Creighton and Higham, op. cit. in note 8, 45.

barriers in comparison to the King's Gate, as it was only the royal household that were to see this inner sanctum. In some respects this argument is similar to that of Dixon and Lott. They argue that the upper ward provided a private royal household, while the lower ward was the residence of the Justicar of the newly conquered principality and the castle's constable.[19] However, I suggest the gatehouse that was used, and therefore the ward that was entered, depended on the importance and standing of the visitor as opposed to whose household they wished to reach.

THE CHAPEL OF ST MARY

If we now return to the subject of castle and the Church, it is possible to note that the unusual relationships that are found inside the castle, where the secular seems to preside over the religious, continue beyond the castle walls. As mentioned above, the borough itself was not furnished with a church until 1303, when the chapel of St Mary was built in its NW. corner. Previously the town's inhabitants had the inconvenience of travelling to the chapel's mother church at Llanbeblig. Leaving a royal establishment for such a time without a church would perhaps seem unusual. Given that this was a town attached to one the most grandiose and spectacular royal structures within the kingdom, comparable to any contemporary on the continent, and intended as a centre of political power in the newly conquered territories, this absence is even more marked.

Prior to his campaigns in Wales, Edward had already involved himself in religious building on a grand scale with the foundation of Vale Royal Abbey in Cheshire, a Cistercian monastery of grandeur that was intended to dwarf its contemporaries.[20] However, his interest and financial contributions soon diminished as castle building began in N. Wales.

We cannot level the failure to provide a place of worship at Caernarfon at a discrimination against the Welsh inhabitants of the town given that it was English colonisers who were intended to inhabit the castle and settlement. Nor can it be attributed to the slow influx of English burgesses into the town, given that its population was likely to have been even greater while it was being built when a large retinue of English labourers and craftsmen dwelt around the massive building site. At New Winchelsea (East Sussex), an Edwardian planned town of the 1290s, plots for churches were earmarked from its conception.[21] It is difficult to perceive that Caernarfon was so over-crowded by this time that the marginal plot of the chapel of St Mary was the only area still available for building, for Caernarfon was by no means the most successful Edwardian town. (This is something that is currently impossible to prove by excavation and is unlikely to be shown conclusively otherwise.) It did, however, house a prestigious group of administrators, including the sheriff, coroners and local officers, as well as the chief Justiciar and chamberlain of N. Wales and their retinue. So, while the

[19] P. Dixon and B. Lott, 'The courtyard and the tower: contexts and symbols in the development of the late medieval great houses', *J. British Archaeol. Assoc.*, 146 (1993), 93–4.
[20] C. Platt, *A Social History and Archaeology from the Conquest to A.D. 1600* (London, 1978), 69.
[21] R. K. Morris, *Churches in the Landscape* (London, 1989), 198.

population was not large, it did carry a certain status.[22] Recent work by Bachrach has highlighted the extensive lengths that Edward I would go to in order to provide religious provisions for his armies. But we should not forget that the well-paid chaplains housed with garrisons in royal castles may have had a dual function by working as royal clerks, and may have also supplemented their employment and income with work in the surrounding parish.[23]

The situation at Caernarfon is in stark contrast to the actions taken at Rhuddlan Castle following the first Welsh War of Edward I in Wales (1276–7). Attempts were made by the King to encourage the nearby cathedral church and see of St Asaph to relocate within the castle's associated town walls, under the protection of the new castle. In addition to a contribution to the costs of construction, an offer of 1,000 marks was offered by Edward I for this scheme, although the proposal was ultimately unsuccessful.[24] This highlights how during this initial campaign Edward I was making a concerted effort to bring the symbols of the Welsh Church into alignment with his own foundations.

At Caernarfon, however, when a chapel was finally built, no effort was made to create a new parochial centre (as opposed to the much greater task of moving an entire see at Rhuddlan), and instead a small chapel of ease was built. Yet if we examine its position within the borough, this chapel appears marginalised within the wider townscape. It stands at the most peripheral position within the castle walls, at the point most distant from the castle itself and yet at the same time still within the physical boundary of the royal town.

Thus the site of the chapel was entirely hidden from view within the borough, being completely isolated from the two town gates. Passage from the latter entrances would have led directly on to the main high street, and only passage down the relatively minor Church Street would have brought the visitor into contact with the small chapel, which would have been out of view to the main flows of traffic to the castle, shire hall and markets of the town. It is my contention that this was not simply a consequence of the physical constraints of the site, or the result of an unplanned townscape, but part of a conscious undermining of the Church's physical presence by the royal power.

Although parochial boundaries and associated rights were well established by the late 13th century, and the Church would be unwilling to relinquish those rights without resistance, there is still something suspect about this case.[25] In contrast with the planned town at New Winchelsea, no part of Caernarfon appears to have been set aside for even a dependent chapel, and the eventual position of the town's ecclesiastical focus was marginal.

We know that Edward II licensed the chapel without the need of an Episcopal license, again like the chapels of the castle itself. Once more, we see the flexing of royal power and the extension of its rights over that of the Church, and that the chapel was only permitted under *royal* favour. Henry of Ellerton,

[22] Taylor, op. cit. in note 2, 38–9.
[23] Bachrach, op. cit. in note 4, 273.
[24] M. Powicke, *The Thirteenth Century* (Oxford, 1991), 434.
[25] Morris, op. cit. in note 21, 226.

at that time in charge of building at Caernarfon, was licensed to build on his burgess plot. Ellerton took over the direction of work following the death of Walter of Hereford in 1309. He was certainly in direct contact with Edward II, who ordered the continuation of work on ancillary structures like the mill pond and stables, brewhouse and bakery for the justice courts until the King's chamberlain arrived to convey his rewards and wishes more fully in person. He was certainly involved directly in design of the new townscape and was finally rewarded for his loyalty to the crown in 1318 when he was appointed master and surveyor on all the royal castles of N. Wales.[26] While it may be pushing the argument too far, we may even suppose that it was only under the eventual pressure of the town inhabitants themselves that Ellerton was pushed to build the chapel, although a decision was consciously made to make it as discrete as possible.

Of the chapel itself, only fragments of the 14th-century arcades still exist, although the dimensions of the present chapel appear little changed overall. Most notably the chapel lacks a tower; a fact that I feel again is unlikely to be simple coincidence. Instead, the chapel is built into the very fabric of the NW. corner of the town walls and is overlooked by the circular corner tower of the urban defence, the interior of which it partially utilises. The result of this arrangement, which at first may appear to have derived from the expedient use of the existing town wall, left the chapel invisible within the skyline of the town, due to the lack of a distinct church tower.

It is difficult to avoid the conclusion, given the chapel's low priority in terms of both its topographical position and physical structure, that it was purposefully deprived of a meaningful place within the topography of Caernarfon. Sidelined to the obscure limits of the royal town, it was at the same time held within the physical remit of that power and was quite literally dependent on the town wall's fabric for its physical existence. As we have seen in the castle itself, the chapel appears to have been appropriated and consumed by the royal power. It was clear to all that the Church functioned only by royal permission.

DISCUSSION

The question is, who was responsible for the design and qualities of a castle, particularly these 13th-century examples?[27] Nicola Coldstream has suggested that the appearance at Caernarfon is so individual that its design was likely to have been heavily influenced by Edward I directly. But what of the argument here, placing the castle in its wider context? Can this all be attributed to the conscious manipulation of Edward and his architects? The prominent theme of this paper has been to suggest that the designer of Caernarfon and its associated borough manipulated it to produce a very particular spectacle of power. I would

[26] Colvin, op. cit. in note 14, 384–5.
[27] N. Coldstream, 'Architects, Advisors and Design at Edward I's Castles in Wales', *Archit. Hist.*, 46 (2003), 19–36.

argue that this was a proclamation of royal strength, both to the everyday and more prestigious visitor to the castle, and a very conscious statement towards the Church.

'Imperial' connotations are frequently highlighted at Caernarfon, though the desire for association with Rome was not new to England in the 13th century. The 12th-century work of Geoffrey of Monmouth had already developed the parallel origins of England and Rome by legendary figures from the ancient city of Troy.[28] This fashion among the nobility of High-medieval England must be seen as part of the ongoing redefinition of identity through association with the past. We must be careful in utilising the terminology of imperialism. The concept and practice has been shown to be highly contextual and unlikely to have remained static, so that any High-medieval perception of the Roman empire would be corruptly idealised in concept and ultimately 'medieval' in practice.[29] We also find Edward I immersing himself in the imagery of the Arthurian legend and associating with the heroic Old Testament figure Judas Maccabeus in his paintings at Westminster Palace (Greater London), and taking on the title of 'Hammer of the Scots'.[30] I would argue that these broader associations drew on his interest in the great rulers of history and mythology, and that a grand concept of imperialism was of lesser importance.

Importantly, I have questioned the validity of certain 'military' aspects of the castle, with the supposedly unparalleled strength in the King's Gate and the massive concentration of firepower provided by vantage points in its walls. However, in highlighting the vulnerability of other areas in the castle I have not intended to deny the military 'value' of these structures, nor their violent associations. By the very act of building a castle, Edward I was joining a history of violent architecture, regardless of whether that violence was *real* or not, and at the same time developing his own sense of glory that stemmed from High-medieval warfare. These were violent people building structures embedded in the imagery and reality of violence.

In building a strong-walled structure, they were creating a defensible place. In its scale alone, Caernarfon was an intimidating and arguably impenetrable castle. Yet, as David Stocker highlighted, we have to move away from the general's armchair in believing that castle design showed such a massive emphasis on tactical thinking.[31] Not that this was beyond the High-medieval mind. If anything it was more pragmatic about what could be achieved in the reality of warfare, which was harsh, chaotic and virtually lacking in communication. It is a more modern western trait that believes it can control the intricacies of warfare through a technological and strategic imperative, although the reality has often proved very different.

[28] C. Daniell, *From Norman Conquest to Magna Carta: England 1066–1215* (London 2003), 182.
[29] S. E. Alcock, T. N. D'Altroy, K. D. Morrison and C. M. Sinopoli (eds.), *Empires: Perspectives from Archaeology and History* (Cambridge, 2001).
[30] R. K. Morrison, 'The architecture of Arthurian enthusiasm: castle symbolism in the reigns of Edward I and his successors', 63–81 in M. Strickland (ed.), *Armies, Chivalry and Warfare in Medieval Britain and France: Proceedings of the 1995 Harlaxton Symposium* (Stamford, 1998); V. Sekules, *Medieval Art* (Oxford, 2001).
[31] D. Stocker, 'The shadow of the general's armchair', *Archaeol. J.*, 149 (1992), 415–20.

What I mean to suggest is that the builders of these castles were acutely aware of the shortcomings of 'tactical' warfare. If ever besieged, the Queen's Gate was likely to afford just as effective protection as the King's Gate. But as we now so readily acknowledge, sieges were more often little more than contractual affairs, and when castles were stormed it was more often than not by surprise or ruse, as was seen at the beginning of the Welsh rebellion in 1282. When Caernarfon actually came under siege by a combined Welsh and French force in the Glyndŵr rebellion of the early 15th century, despite being incomplete and probably in disrepair, the castle survived intact.[32]

A second point to reiterate is that emphasising the extent to which Edward I physically disregarded the church in no way questions the King's piety. This was a man whose convictions during his crusade were assured, even if they brought little success, and who ordered the construction of the Eleanor crosses as a genuine act of love and religious devotion. Michael Prestwich has championed the King's piety, although importantly he noted how Edward had little time for the rights and customs of the Church as an institution when they clashed with his own.[33]

We have seen this at Caernarfon, both in the licensing and positioning of the various chapels around the castle and town. I argue this highlights the discrimination of the Church as a *political* entity by the royal power. As noted above, at Rhuddlan Edward made efforts after the 1276–7 war to bring the cathedral and see of St Asaph within the borough walls from its existing site. But following the 1282–3 war, when English soldiers burnt the cathedral in response to claims that the bishop had supported the uprising, only £100 in compensation was offered by the king. This was a pitifully small amount in comparison to the 1,000 marks and aid for rebuilding that had previously been offered, and perhaps reflects the changing attitude of Edward I towards the Welsh Church.[34] It appears the royal power had little time for the church unless it was readily willing to acquiesce to its hegemony.

Prior to the construction of the new castle and settlement at Rhuddlan (1277–82), a Dominican priory had been founded in 1258 adjacent to the earlier Norman castle and settlement that lie to the south of the later castle. Yet despite continuing endowments from the royal household, the friary was left isolated from the new settlement, an unusual act given that it was a preaching order.[35] The Franciscan priory at Beaumaris (Isle of Anglesey) suffered a similar snub. Established in 1237 and burial place of Joan, wife of Llywelyn the Great and aunt of Edward I, it was left at a distance from the new Edwardian castle and town.[36]

[32] Taylor, op. cit. in note 2, 16.
[33] M. Prestwich, 'The piety of Edward I', 120–8 in W. M. Ormrod (ed.), *England in the Thirteenth Century: Proceedings of the 1984 Harlaxton Symposium* (Dover, 1985), 128; M. Prestwich, *Edward I* (London, 1997), 562.
[34] T. R. K. Goulstone, *St Asaph Cathedral: Yesterday and Today* (St Asaph, 1999), 6; E. Hubbard, *The Buildings of Wales: Clywd* (London, 1994), 435.
[35] A. J. Taylor, *Rhuddlan Castle* (Cardiff, 1987), 12.
[36] A. J. Taylor, *Beaumaris Castle* (Cardiff, 1999), 5.

Similarly, the Cistercian foundation at Aberconwy (Conwy) was moved 12.8 km away to a site at Maenan (Conwy) (and yet no such accommodation was made for the small Dominican friary of Rhuddlan or the Franciscan house at Beaumaris). This was in order to make way for the new castle and borough of Conwy, in a complicated ecclesiastical procedure reluctantly undertaken by Archbishop Pecham.[37] Of this monastic house, which had held strong connections with the Welsh royal house and was the burial place of Llywelyn the Great, only the sizeable church was retained to serve the towns parochial needs, although the social and physical scars of its grander history were likely to have been obvious.[38]

Finally, Edward I was to use the obligation value of the vacant see of York to pay for expenditure at York in 1279, while Flint and Harlech were similarly supplemented by revenue from the Winchester diocese.[39] Repeatedly, we see the extension and flexing of royal rights to proclaim the power of the royal household over the Church, whether English or Welsh, particularly in the scenario discussed above where the conquest and reorganisation of N. Wales provided ample opportunities to redefine royal roles and identities.

CONCLUSION

The central aim of this paper has been to argue that space and structure were manipulated at Caernarfon to produce a consciously royal spectacle of power. Through the use of martial architecture, particularly at the King's Gate and along the N. curtain, the strength and power of the new ruling household was proclaimed. I have suggested that this in itself does not invalidate the structure as a defendable unit, but the design was not centred on an unrealistic belief in the superiority of a purely tactical layout. Ultimately, the King's Gate was a theatrical piece of architecture imposed on the visitor to the castle. Nevertheless, it would still have been a highly defensible gateway even if it had only had the single doorway, portcullis and drawbridge of the Queen's Gate. Yet, as the medieval designer would have been completely aware, such occasions where violent conflict was to arise (as opposed to the usual contractual affairs of sieges, or conversely the times where castles were tricked or stormed into submission) were extremely rare.

What is more unusual in this example, and the evidence from several other castles of the Welsh campaigns backs, is the visual domination of the religious power by the secular. Given the scale and palatial quality of the building at Caernarfon and the other Edwardian castles, an investment in, or at least the foundation of, a complementary religious house, albeit a dependent foundation, may be expected. Yet at Caernarfon we see that the Church, in its broader, institutional context, is played down to such an extent that within the skyline of

[37] Powicke, op. cit. in note 24, 434.
[38] Taylor, op. cit. in note 15, 5.
[39] Pounds, op. cit. in note 4, 91.

the castle and borough no evidence of a religious focus can be seen. Instead it is a landscape nailed solely by the towers of the secular, royal power.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Keith Lilley, Claire Jacklin, Mick Atha and Emma Waterton for making comments on various drafts of this paper, Peter Webster and Denys Pringle for advice on my undergraduate dissertation and encouragement in revising it for publication. I would also like to thank the anonymous referees who provided valuable criticism of the original draft of this paper, and the editors who were always on hand with advice. Thanks also to Cadw for permission to use their plans of Caernarfon Castle.