

Conwy Castle



Booklet Template

Purpose

To reflect upon wars of the past.

To appreciate great buildings in our history

Entrance of Pupils

A thought provoking slideshow introducing the theme of 'Conway Castle' for the pupils to enter assembly to (10 minutes)

Introduction

Conwy Castle is quite remarkable.

Its stunning - beautiful and - genuinely awesome in the correct use of the word. Standing next to it - you get a sense of how massive it is.

It stands on top of an outcrop of sandstone overlooking the River Conwy in North Wales. Inspiring, fearsome - majestic - and mysterious.

About the Construction

It begs the question....why? Why was this engineering masterpiece - nearly 750 years old now - and built without a power tool, a computer or any of the technology of the modern day being built in this amazing part of North Wales with the beautiful mountains of Snowdonia as its picturesque backdrop?

Was it intended to be impressive? Yes, most certainly! Its magnificent - my word how impressive it is! Was it meant to be a safe place for the army?

Its 23 metres high - so nobody can climb over the top of it. Its built on bedrock - so nobody can tunnel underneath it. Its walls are more than 3



metres thick this so it can't easily be knocked down.

Yes - it was a wonderfully safe place for the army.

It was built between 1283 and 1287 (a total of just four years) any soldier of the time would have been happy to be safely inside these walls.

Was it meant to be a living place of great grandeur?

The living quarters of this castle are tucked behind a formidable military garrison. This was top of the range castle building of the 13th Century. This was the most luxurious, comfortable accommodation - fit for a king - and queen - quite literally.

This and is one of the most magnificent castles not just in Wales, not just in the United Kingdom - but certainly in at least Europe and arguably one of the best castles in the whole world.

Against the rugged and beautiful - and green backdrop of Snowdonia Mountains - the observer would have gasped to see the castle in all its brilliant white painted glory.

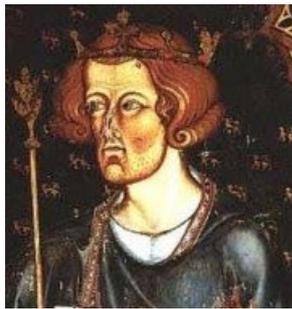


King Edward 1 and Llywelyn

So why was this castle built - and why is it such a king amongst castles?

It comes down to one man— Edwards 1st, King of England. He was the King of England at a time when it was pretty dangerous to be a renowned noble man.

Edward I was a great military man. He had fought wars across Europe and into the Holy Land. He was a Crusader - and was a man to be feared.



About this time - Wales wasn't a single kingdom or part of Great Britain - it was an area split up into many different sections ruled by different Welsh noblemen and princes.

Edwards' father Henry III had settled into an uneasy truce of sorts with a famous Welsh leader Llywelyn the Great. Llywelyn the Great was probably the most powerful Welsh leader of that time and had many battles with the English King.

When Edward took over as English King, Llywelyn the Great's grandson, Llywelyn ap Gruffudd was the most prominent Welsh prince and leader. He fought with the English many times. Having lost in battle to the English, he was required by King Edward to pay homage to him.

Edward instructed Llywelyn ap Gruffudd to go to Chester to bend his knee towards him and invited a host of local dignitaries - nobleman of the area to observe. Llywelyn didn't show up and the King was hugely embarrassed. He was furious.



Edward decided to teach Llywelyn a lesson once and for all. He went to war with the Welsh Prince, defeated him and had him killed. He decided to make sure that there would be no more wars with the Welsh. He would take over Wales once and for all - and never allow the Welsh Princes to fight back.

So he created a ring of enormous and awe inspiring castles around North Wales one of which was Conwy.

Cost

Conwy Castle and Town Walls cost an enormous £15,000 at the time to build. That's about the same as tens and tens of millions of pounds now and possibly as much as £100,000,000 in today's money. That's a lot of money - and actually he nearly made England as a country bankrupt (run out of money) fulfilling his wishes.

Conwy Castle was built as a castle within a castle. It has an outer ward - which would have been the military garrison where the soldiers stayed. The soldiers and their animals would have lived there.

The castle had its own bakehouse for bread, its own bakery and huge kitchens.

The enormous Great Hall would have seen large gatherings where meat was being roasted on the giant highly decorative fireplaces.

The castle did have its own well which stored water naturally about 92 feet below the surface - a natural benefit of the rocky outcrop where the castle was built.

Protection

To get into the castle there were two main entrances. The entrance for most people was from the ditch below - now the main street in Conwy. A long steep sloping path leading to a draw bridge - which the castle could lift up if there was a threat. Then there was a series of gates and portcullis to keep people out.

At the top of the Barbican - the end of the castle where, there are a series of



murder holes. If you reached this point - you still hadn't reached the main door. The soldiers of the castle would give you a warm, warm welcome! Boiling oil, boiling water, red hot sand that would get inside your armour and literally cook you alive.

Spears would be hurled at anyone who had survived getting this far. It would have been a risky move to try and enter the castle without permission - to say the least and that was before they started firing the arrows. There are 142 arrow slits constructed around the castle - and a further 500 arrow slits built into the Town Walls. The Town Walls were built at just the same time as the castle.

The Royal Quarters

The inner ward was where the royalty would have stayed. It was secure and highly luxurious. The Royal Rooms were built into the Barbican overlooking the River Conwy – that's the end of the castle overlooking the River Conwy. The rooms would have had fine furniture of the time and the most exquisite drapes and cloth available. There would have been a wealth of colour and luxury on show to demonstrate just how important the people were.

The best rooms of the Royal Quarters are the Chapel Rooms - since they give a little insight into the minds of the royalty of the time.

The Royal Chapel was already a private chapel. There was a bigger chapel for the soldiers in the outer ward. The people of the time took religion very seriously and would have had regular services - particularly every Sunday. They would have had priests and chaplains staying at the castle permanently.

Watergate

Down below the Royal Quarters was the second entrance to the castle. The Water Gate. The Water Gate has been removed now to accommodate the three bridges that have been built into the rock upon which the castle stands. The Water Gate was the least used entrance - but was arguably the most important.

The whole reason that the castle was built in this particular location - right at the edge of the Conwy River was because there were few roads at the time -



and the safest form of transport would have been by boat.

To keep food and drink supplied to the castle from nearby England would have involved passing many angry and unhappy Welsh folk if they went by the available paths with horse and cart transport. Edward could have all the supplies needed for the castle sent from just up the coast in Chester - to sail down the Irish Sea and arrive at the WaterGate and bring the goods safely into the castle without being killed by the angry Welsh.

It was - if you like - an early version of the Tesco Delivery vans!!

A Huge Achievement

So there we have it. Conwy Castle. Undoubtedly tough, beautifully comfortable and imposing and impressive.

Was this a huge achievement of Edward 1 - keeping the area safe from the Welsh Princes - or was he foolish for nearly bankrupting the English people after he invaded Wales? They would have had many years paying for his private wishes - long after he died?

What do you think?



Quotation

King Edward 1 has been called 'A Great and Terrible King.'

Why do you think he might have been spoken of in this way and by whom?

Do you think it is a fair comment?



The Bible Says:

There are many famous battles recorded in the Old Testament. One of the most famous was the 'Battle of Jericho'.

The story tells us that the Israeli Army marched around the outside of the city of Jericho for 7 days, blowing trumpets and carrying the Ark of the Covenant (which held the two stones upon which God had given his 10 commandments to Moses). By doing this, Joshua, the army commander, showed that he had God on his side.

On the seventh day, Joshua commanded the army to shout in praise of God and miraculously the walls of the city crumbled and fell allowing the Israeli army to enter the city and take it as their own.

Let's Pray

Dear God

Thank you for giving us such a rich history to study and so many wonderful buildings to visit. It is from this that we learn to make sense of the past, which helps us to understand the present and try to avoid mistakes in the future.

Amen

Putting it into Practice

Over the week, lets build a model of an old castle together.

Today, go and research the parts of a castle. If possible, print off some Pictures from the internet.

Exit of Pupils

A thought provoking slideshow summarising the theme of 'Conway Castle' for the pupils to enter assembly to (10 minutes)



Collective Worship and Putting it into Practice for the Rest of the Week

Day 2

Dear God

Help us to understand that there are always at least two sides to an argument.

Help us to learn to think about situations from different people's point of view so that we can understand how every side feels and consider how they are treated.

Amen

From the research of the buildings in a castle, draw up a plan or layout of how the building might have looked and label the key aspects.

Day 3

Dear God

Help us to learn to share your world fairly and with justice. Let us be considerate to those who have lived in places and developed them over centuries but equally let us remember that the world was given for all people to share.

Amen

Decide how the class is going to be split into groups and which group is responsible for making each section of the castle.



Day 4

Dear God

Thank you for the amazing buildings from the past that we can enjoy today.

Let us learn from appreciate the ingenuity of previous civilisations.

Amen

Complete the building of the castle! Label the different buildings according to your plans on Day 2.

Day 5

Dear God

Let us pray for all people who are living with war in their countries and hope for a peaceful end to the conflict.

Amen

Discuss the idea of a 'just war':

1. War for a good cause
2. Declared by a lawful authority
3. For a good intention
4. Every other way of solving the problem has been tried first
5. The should be a good chance of success
6. Only appropriate force should be used

