

A Selection of Interesting British Castles

Preamble

The document provides information on castles which have been viewed, and on others of interest. A total of 844 castles on the mainland and inner islands of Great Britain, are listed, of which number, 675 (80%) have been viewed. I should explain that I have adopted a criterion of viewed, to include castles I have observed in such a way as to confirm their existence and check out the main features, but falling some way short of a full perambulation. The list is a large sample, but not comprehensive; Salter, in his valuable series of books, probably lists more than three times as many existing in some form, and some websites present larger selections in individual regions. Nonetheless, I believe that I have collected a substantial amount of information. My selection is idiosyncratic, and includes almost all the castles I had visited by the time I began to put the document together, a few years ago; at that time they comprised a bit less than half the selection. To them I added castles with the aid mainly of the sources in my bibliography, obeying the criterion that there were sufficient remains to give a reasonable idea of the castles as they were in medieval times. I have usually omitted castles where the remains are only earthworks without coherent masonry above ground, and those which have been restored such that the medieval aspect is left mainly to the imagination, even if general forms have been preserved. The word 'medieval' in previous sentences has been stretched a bit to include 16th century castles, less valid in England than Scotland or Wales, but I have considered 1600 as an absolute cut-off.

In presenting the information, I have divided the country into regions, sometimes individual counties where castles are 'thick on the ground', otherwise groups of counties. For each, I have produced a document containing a listing of the castles and a single page information sheet for each one; they can be accessed through Table 1 on the next page. Each document lists the castles in its region in a table on the front page, and distinguishes between the castles which have been viewed, (black type) and those which have not, (red type); it gives the National Grid location of all of them. The table presents additional information, namely, the castle type, i.e. motte & bailey, enclosure, tower + barmkin, fortified house, etc., the date of origin, of the visible castle remains, (but not the build-date of the oldest known castle on the site), the occupation status now, and if empty, an estimate of the date at which the castle ceased to be inhabited, and finally, a few words about what is to be seen on the site now. The information sheets always include a representational photograph, and text, but where the configuration is complex, I usually add a schematic diagram or aerial view obtained from the web. Brevity is the rule for the text, especially when I know that guide books are available, but I give a verbal description of the castle's whereabouts, an account of the history of the castle and its precursors, running through to the present day, and a description of the whole, including dimensions of at least one key building.

Table 1 shows the distribution of selected castles amongst 19 different regions of the country, and indicates the overall status of visits to them. A desk top exercise played a key role in producing the information sheets, and I have now produced a sheet for every castle whether viewed or not. Whereas the photographs of viewed castles are usually my own, the others have been taken from the internet, along with many schematic drawings. I hope that a blanket acknowledgement and grateful thanks will suffice, as appending a list identifying each individually, (over 1000 items) would unbalance the documents, and the exercise is entirely free from thoughts of financial exploitation. Anyone objecting to the use of material, he/she rightly regards as their own can contact me, and I

shall remove the offending article. The words on each sheet are my own; I have drawn facts largely from the items in the bibliography, but have consulted many more websites even if usually briefly; again, my thanks is expressed in a general way for the efforts which have made the information easily available.

Table 1 presents my regional breakdown of Great Britain, the number of selected castles in each region, and the number viewed. It has another important function as the pathway to accessing the nested documents dealing with the castles in each region; simply click on a region name in the 2nd column to get there.

ID No.	Region/County	No. of Castles Identified	No. of Castles Viewed
S1	Scotland - West & North-West	50	22
S2	Scotland - North-East	54	41
S3	Scotland - Central, Angus, Perth & Kinross, Stirling	45	23
S4	Scotland - Central, Fife & Clackmannan	42	40
S5	Scotland - South-East, Lothians	45	45
S6	Scotland - South-East, Borders	47	47
S7	Scotland - South-West, Strathclyde	57	43
S8	Scotland - South-West, Dumfries & Galloway	39	33
E1	England - North, Northumberland	58	58
E2	England - North, Durham & Yorkshire	52	52
E3	England - North, Cumbria & Lancashire	40	37
E4	England - East	43	41
E5	England - Midlands	43	33
E6	England - Marches	40	34
E7	England - South	57	35
E8	England - South-West	38	28
W1	Wales - North	20	18
W2	Wales - Mid	15	12
W3	Wales - South	59	33
	TOTALS	844	675

Table 1. Numbers of Castles per Region/County, and Numbers Visited

The collection of a large amount of data in one place is a temptation to take a holistic view and make the effort to draw general conclusions about how the types of castle built, varied with such parameters as region and build date. However, the limitations of the information, for all that 844 castles have been considered, must be appreciated. So the selection is neither comprehensive, nor randomised, and to a degree, the castles have been selected on the basis of rate of decay or lack of it, since only those displaying coherent masonry remains have been selected, while a tranche have been rejected because in my view, restoration has hidden the medieval fabric. In spite of these strictures, I present Table 2, as of interest, if little more.

ID	No. of No. Castles	CASTLE TYPES					Fort	Built pre-1300	Still Occupied
		Fortified Hall House	Tower/ Keep	Enclosure/ Barmkin	Motte & Bailey				
S1	50	6	29	35	0	0	21	10	
S2	54	4	32	26	2	0	14	10	
S3	45	2	36	24	0	0	5	14	
S4	42	10	30	19	0	0	4	10	
S5	45	0	27	23	1	0	6	20	
S6	47	5	36	8	1	2	3	11	
S7	57	3	40	24	1	1	8	14	
S8	39	1	30	16	1	0	6	6	
E1	58	2	32	15	6	1	16	19	
E2	52	16	10	15	12	0	21	16	
E3	40	5	20	17	2	0	11	20	
E4	43	8	9	11	16	0	27	11	
E5	43	14	4	13	12	1	22	16	
E6	40	8	6	9	18	0	31	9	
E7	57	13	13	16	16	9	36	24	
E8	38	8	4	6	11	6	17	8	
W1	20	0	6	16	4	0	20	1	
W2	15	1	0	9	5	0	15	1	
W3	59	12	16	39	1	0	49	7	

Table 2. Regional Distribution of Castle Numbers according to characteristics

A few comments may help; the 1st column identifies the 19 regions as in Table 1 on the previous page; fortified hall houses are normally 2 storeys high, and unprotected by precinct walls; towers and keeps are regarded as essentially similar, even if there are differences of scale and surrounding structures; forts are post-1500 constructions housing artillery; occupation numbers would be greatly inflated if castles which have had substantial modern make-overs had been considered. Numbers for castle types do not add horizontally, because individual castles were quite often hybrid involving 2 types.

I do not wish to dwell too long on the results in Table 2 because of the limitations in the sample, mentioned earlier, but a few examples of the conclusions which might be drawn are given in no particular order; they are I am sure well known to experts in the field but perhaps give some added weight.

1. As regards castles built before 1300, there are few in a large part of Scotland, because of the policy of castle destruction followed by those resisting English invasion, whereas in Wales, almost all of them predate 1300, and are related to the struggles between Welsh princes, and the attempts at conquest by Norman/English invaders.

2. Motte & Bailey castles were a Norman artefact, and those which have left masonry remains are mainly to be found in south and central England, with early origins. Many were converted to shell keeps or enclosure castles but a significant number retained their form with wooden structures replaced by stone ones.

3. Strikingly few Welsh castles remain occupied, perhaps in part because many are complex structures expensive and difficult to convert into more comfortable residences when the inmate's need for protection had diminished.

Bibliography:

It is appropriate to begin by emphasising the achievement of Mr. M. Salter who has produced over 20 volumes, (Folly Publications) presenting descriptions, diagrams and B/W photographs of most surviving castles in Great Britain. If anyone wishes to explore the castles in any region, they might look at this document, and then expand their horizons by obtaining the relevant volume of Salter's series.

The following websites, in no particular order, have assisted me most.

pastscape.org.uk

canmore.org.uk

coflein.gov.uk

en.wikipedia.org/wiki

british-history.ac.uk

castlewales.com

britainexpress.com

thecastleguy.co.uk

castlesfortsbattles.co.uk

medievalheritage.eu

I have obtained information from many other places, local websites, walkers and ramblers websites, drone fliers' videos, to name a few, but they really are too numerous to mention.