



TOWERS & RAMPARTS

In 1264, less than 50 years after Magna Carta, England was once more plunged into civil war, in a turbulent period of English history known as the Second Barons' Rebellion. An alliance of powerful Barons led by the Earl of Leicester, Simon De Montfort, ranged against the royalist forces of King Henry III.

Warwick Castle and its owner, William Mauduit, declared for the king. Consequently De Montfort, who owned nearby Kenilworth Castle, attacked and easily took Warwick Castle in a surprise night-time manoeuvre. Mauduit was captured and imprisoned. He was subsequently released (on payment of a ransom) but was to die a year later of the Bloody Flux (dysentery).

Not wanting to waste troops on garrisoning a castle he didn't need, but also not wanting to leave the fortress intact for his enemies, De Montfort ordered that Warwick be 'slighted'. The East Front, where the barbican entrance is today, and main curtain wall were destroyed, as was a section of the north wall. Records are unclear as to the actual extent of the damage, however, the bulk of the towers and ramparts standing today date to the latter part of the 14th century, which suggests that the damage was extensive.

A year later, De Montfort's life and rule came to a bloody end at the Battle of Evesham. He was hacked to death on the battlefield by an assassination squad, under the orders of the Prince of Wales, the future Edward I, who had given the simple order "search and destroy". Warwick Castle was left behind as a casualty of war.

Approximately 100 years later the 11th Earl of Warwick, Thomas De Beauchamp, upon returning home from war with the French, began the construction of the towers and ramparts we have today.



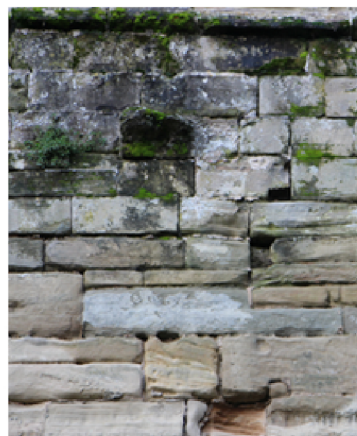


CLARENCE TOWER

The entrance to the towers and ramparts is made through Clarence Tower. Its construction was ordered by King Richard III, whose ownership of Warwick Castle came about through his wife, Anne Neville, daughter of the Kingmaker. Clarence Tower and Bear Tower opposite are the only sections remaining of a royal keep which was planned to extend into the main courtyard. Both Clarence and Bear Tower are unfinished as work was discontinued after the death of Richard III at Bosworth Field in 1485. The unfinished towers to the inner side of the fortification were demolished by Lancelot Capability Brown when he raised the castle courtyard by 3 metres as part of his modernization programme during the middle of the 18th century.



On climbing the steps at the entrance to Clarence Tower (named after the brother of Richard III, George Duke of Clarence) you will arrive at a rare example of a corbelled turret, where a watch would be posted as a lookout along the base of the curtain wall. Climbing onto the curtain wall you will get your first real impression of the power and strength of such a structure. The curtain walls at Warwick are up to 3 metres thick in places.





CEASAR'S TOWER

Caesar's Tower was built during the massive period of construction in the latter half of the 14th century. It is in fact the taller of the two major towers at the castle, standing at 44 metres from base to tip. However, the base of the tower is set 10 metres lower than Guy's. The base of the tower, which is set into the side of the cliff, can be seen by heading down towards the Mill and Engine House.

The design of Caesar's Tower is likely to be French in origin. As with Guy's Tower it is machicolated, and features a double parapet (rare in Europe). Its use during the middle ages was habitation; housing visitors, and noble prisoners of war waiting to be ransomed. Its most notable guest, even if a little unwilling, was Edward IV, who was imprisoned at the castle by the Warwick the Kingmaker in 1469.



GUY'S TOWER

From the curtain wall you will begin the long climb to the top of Guy's Tower. Guy's was primarily used for accommodation during the middle ages and would have housed a number of notable figures from the period; including both Henry V and his young son Henry VI who was educated within the Warwick household.

Once at the top you will be treated to unparalleled views of the castle exterior and the surrounding countryside. Guy's Tower is 12-sided and stands at 29 metres high. Dotted around each of the twelve sides are grated machicolations from which rocks and other projectiles could be thrown down upon an enemy attempting to breach the base of the tower.

Beginning your descent of Guy's Tower you will come to a room which is lined with television screens telling the story of the Battle of Poitiers (one of the key battles for the English during the 100 Years' War). The 11th Earl of Warwick, Thomas de Beauchamp, commanded the flank at Poitiers. His ferocity on the battlefield earned him the nickname 'The Devil Warwick'.

Continuing your tour brings you to the east curtain wall and the castle barbican, where you can see murder holes and the open section known as the killing zone from where defenders could rain down pain and death on any unfortunates trying to breach the castle via the main entrance.

Before continuing to Caesar's Tower, be sure to descend the few steps in the barbican, where you will find an exhibition based on the trial of Joan of Arc. The 13th Earl of Warwick, Richard de Beauchamp, was Captain of Calais and Rouen at the time of Joan's capture and it was he who organized her trial and subsequent execution.





THE BARBICAN & GATEHOUSE FROM GROUND LEVEL



Today the entrance to the barbican and gatehouse is via a concrete bridge. However, during the middle ages there was a drawbridge in its place which could be raised or lowered in case of attack.

Should an attacking force manage to drag the drawbridge down, they would be faced with the first of two portcullises. Should they manage to get through this, they would then be faced with a set of massive oak doors. The huge hinges on either side of the portcullis give testament to the size and weight of this barrier. As an enemy is trying to breach the doors they would be facing the terror of the murder holes above them from which would rain down a barrage of missiles, burning sand and boiling liquids.



Once through the gates, the attackers would have to negotiate a second set of murder holes before arriving in the killing zone (the open area in the centre of the Barbican), which is itself one big murder hole; more missiles and hot liquid plus the added hazard of crossbowmen would have been stationed above. Finally, the attacking force would have to get through a second portcullis and a third set of murder holes. Not the most pleasant day out for enemies of Warwick Castle.