

A STUDY OF CONWY AND CAERNARVON CASTLES IN WALES: A COLONIAL  
REEXAMINATION OF THE CONQUEST OF WALES, 1284

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King Edward I of England's castle building program in Wales from 1282 to 1295 provides a unique event that can be studied in further detail. Edward's castle building program turns the conquest of Wales into an early example of what future English colonization would become. By examining the building of Conwy and Caernarvon in Wales and the accompanying social programs we are better able to understand how the English viewed conquest and colonization. The conquest spent approximately £35,000 on the building of the castles of Conwy and Caernarvon, a colossal sum for the time. The reallocation of resources from England into Wales provide important similarities to later colonial endeavors, especially in the large application of manpower to build successful colonies. Another similarity becomes the split between the use of local raw resources such as the stone and timber combined with the need for manufactured goods brought from England. The social changes also had a major impact. The construction of Edward's castles Conwy and Caernarvon replaced iconic locations of Welsh power. The accompanying Statute of Wales (1284) changed the Welsh legal landscape and forced the English legal system on the Welsh. By replacing Welsh locations of power and instituting legal reform England made it possible for its colonists to safely enter northern Wales and take control of the region.

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## INTRODUCTION

### Edward I and Wales: War and Construction

Edward I and his conquest of Wales in 1282-1284 changed the political landscape of the British Isles and began the expansion of English control over the rest of Britain.<sup>1</sup> This invasion added Wales to the territories controlled by the English Crown, and the changes in tactics demonstrates Edward's knowledge that he must change the relationship between England and Wales in these territories. The change of relationship would be the colonization of the towns that were built alongside his castles. He had dealt with rebellion before by the Welsh in 1256 when he was prince and made Earl of Chester by Henry III. Llywelyn ap Gruffydd led a rebellion of the Welsh against him, causing him to lose the territory completely.<sup>2</sup> He then fought wars with the Welsh in 1262 and 1276.<sup>3</sup> The constant warfare between England and Wales finally reached their breaking point and Edward I chose to change his tactic. Edward decided that conflict with Wales needed to end, and he chose to make what he believed would be a more permanent end.<sup>4</sup> Edward announced that this new conflict between England and Wales would be different from past ones, and that this greater expenditure of resources would end the major conflicts with Wales.<sup>5</sup> The conflicts with Wales before 1282 were based upon the vassalage of the Kingdom of Gwynedd to the English Crown. Most of southern and central Wales had been occupied by the English under the Marcher Lords, and conflicts between the Welsh and English mostly stemmed

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<sup>1</sup> F. M. Powicke, *The Thirteenth Century, 1216-1307* (2nd. Edition: repr., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962), 400-402.

<sup>2</sup> Marc Morris, *A Great and Terrible King: Edward I and the Forging of Britain* (London: Hutchinson, 2008), 31.

<sup>3</sup> Morris, 52, 142; Powicke, 402, 408.

<sup>4</sup> Powicke, 419.

<sup>5</sup> Ifor Rowlands, "The Edwardian Conquest and its Military Consolidation," in *Edward I and Wales*, ed. Gareth Elwyn Jones Trevor Herbert (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1993), 41.

from the last remaining Welsh kingdom and the inconsistency of the relationship between it and the English Crown. As the power of the Kings of England would wane during moments internal conflict the Kingdom of Gwynedd would push the boundaries of their rule into other areas of Wales and work to change the nature of their relationship with England.

The plan that Edward created for the governance of the newly conquered regions of Wales included Edward's Statue of Wales (1284) and the building of new castles. These castles were built at Conwy, Caernarvon, Criccieth, and Harlech and were a part of the creation of a defensive network designed to prevent the Welsh from rebelling while also securing English control of the region.<sup>6</sup> This plan was incredibly ambitious, and would cost the crown tens of thousands of pounds to secure the material and personnel resources required to build this series of castles. To ensure the castles were manned Edward built towns alongside these castles, and these towns were where the English colonies would originate. Edward forbade the Welsh from settling in the newly created English boroughs. This made it necessary for the English to immigrate to the newly created towns and intermarry with the locals.<sup>7</sup>

I believe that by examining material, personnel and social aspects of the Conwy and Caernarvon castles it is possible to argue that Edward's actions in the kingdom of Gwynedd in northern Wales is an early test run of what would become English colonialism. The pooling together of Edward's resources and the application of these resources to northern Wales is remarkably like later English colonial endeavors. I have chosen the castles Conwy and Caernarvon to be the focus of this study as they were both used by Edward I as a royal home following the conquest of Wales, and both regions where they were built had social value to the

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<sup>6</sup> Powicke, 430.

<sup>7</sup> Ralph A. Griffiths, *Who Were the Townsfolk of Medieval Wales?, Urban Culture in Medieval Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2012), Loc 344, 372.

Welsh, which would fit in line with the colonial narrative of the region..<sup>8</sup> This study demonstrates that the actions that Edward took in northern Wales amount to be an early attempt at establishing colonies, and does this by examining the monetary, physical, and popular resources along with the social actions that Edward takes.

This study breaks down into a few parts starting with a brief narrative account of the history between England and Wales as this history informed Edward I in the actions he takes in 1283-84. Following this I briefly examine the historiography used in this study. Then in the first chapter I examine the materials used, the location these were from, and the costs of these resources. In the second chapter I look at the personnel associated with the building of the castle as the costs and distance required for these workers better provides the reach of the king's power. In the third chapter I exam the social impacts of Edward's castle building program in Wales. By examining these three aspects of the building of Conwy and Caernarvon in Wales I demonstrate that the building program and its effects are an early example of what would become English colonization, by making it safe and possible for the English to take social control of Wales.

#### A Brief History of English-Welsh Conflict

The actions taken by Edward I in his conquest of Wales one must consider the events that led up to the war of 1282. By examining these events, the motivations behind Edward's colonization of the Kingdom of Gwynedd are better understood. With a better understanding of the causes of the conflict it becomes apparent why the colonization happened, and the reasoning behind it becoming a colonization instead of the conquest and vassalage that happened in 1277. What is most apparent during the thirteenth century is the increasing amount of conflict between

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<sup>8</sup> Powicke, 429.



the English and the Welsh. The relative peace of the beginning of the century is gone, replaced by internecine conflict between these two powers.<sup>9</sup>

The accord that the English had with the Welsh at the start of the Thirteenth Century was secure after the English had made inroads into the southern and eastern portions of Wales and installed English officials called the Marcher Lords who policed the border territories. This relationship came about after major conquests in the eleventh and twelfth centuries that secured the Marcher Lords land in Wales creating the accord at the outset of the Thirteenth Century. The control of these territories was more nominal than actual, as the Marcher Lords were content to allow the Welsh to continue in their accustomed manner but did maintain that the English were the rulers.

While the English and Welsh were not fully at peace during the outset of the Thirteenth century conflict did not tend toward outright war. Llewelyn the Great was the ruler of the Welsh kingdom of Gwynedd, which included Snowdonia and was the chief Welsh province.<sup>10</sup> The relationship between the Welsh and the English changes at the end of King John's reign and during Henry III's reign due to the political instability under the English kings. Llywelyn the Great was able to marry the daughter of King John and in turn married his daughters off to the Marcher Lords. Llywelyn the Great maintained relationships with his most powerful direct neighbor the Earl of Chester and extend his influence over much of Wales. Occasionally, conflicts would arise between the Welsh and the English despite these common grounds, for instance during the rebellion against King John, Llywelyn the Great extended his influence over the entire country. After King John died in 1216, Henry III took the throne as a minor and a

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<sup>9</sup> Powicke, 381-382.

<sup>10</sup> J. Beverly Smith, "Welsh Society and Native Power Before Conquest," in *Edward I and Wales*, ed. Gareth Elwyn Jones Trevor Herbert (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1988), 11-12.

group of regents ruled in his stead. These regents gave Llywelyn the Great control over several castles in the southern area of Wales, that he would later lose in a conflict in 1223.<sup>11</sup>

Conflict would return when Hubert de Burgh was gaining power in the Marches and Llywelyn, sensing that the English were attempting to curtail his power, captured the castle Cardigan in 1231. Henry III's response was lackluster, creating a large army then having it sit on a vital thoroughfare between Wales and the rest of England while he had a stone castle built. Hubert de Burgh took control and outlined a better plan for control of the southern Marches. The Marcher Lords in this region were feuding and de Burgh believed that the method to fix these territories was to place bastions of royal power that the marcher lords could rally around. While the English were securing royal power in the south, Llywelyn used this opportunity to continue ravaging the Marcher lands and in November of that year he forced Henry III into a short-lasting truce that would last until Llywelyn the Great's death in 1240. While the English failed to curtail Llywelyn, the plan to reinforce royal power in the weak southern Marches succeeded.<sup>12</sup>

The next conflict began shortly after the death of Llywelyn the Great dealing with his succession. Henry supported the Gruffydd the elder son who the late Llywelyn disinherited against the David the younger son who the late ruler had chosen. The conflict ended with the deaths of both sons, leaving the children of Gruffydd to inherit their realm. The heirs, the chief of which was Llywelyn ap Gruffydd, were in an incredibly tenuous position and surrendered. The peace settlement had the new rulers of Gwynedd recognize Henry III as their liege lord and forced them to give up large areas of territory that their grandfather had gained. At this point, the lands the Welsh princes retained was heavily restricted, with the Marcher Lords and the English

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<sup>11</sup> Powicke, 392-393.

<sup>12</sup> Powicke, 394-397.

crown controlling the rest of the country.<sup>13</sup>

Llywelyn ap Gruffydd was able to rally his people and began reclaiming Welsh power over the course of the next decade. His first action was to seize control of the lands controlled by his brother Owain. After a brief civil war Llywelyn ap Gruffydd gained sole control of the regions left to him. During this time Prince Edward had taken his first steps of political power and his father Henry III gave him control of much of the Welsh-Anglo border starting in Chester and working south. His rule here created increased unrest in Wales as Edward and his officials disregarded the Welsh inhabitants who resented the outside heavy-handed control. Llywelyn took advantage of this, first by conquering territories that were once held by his grandfather and uncle in 1256 and 1257, then declaring himself “Prince of Wales” in 1258 with him having the backing of the Welsh magnates. Llywelyn ap Gruffydd pushed his advantage, easily beating back the counterattack by Edward in 1257 and finally taking the important Marcher castle Abergavenny in 1263.<sup>14</sup> Llywelyn was able to accomplish much of this by shrewd diplomatic policies seeking permanent settlements or failing that truces, only two of which he broke. Following this Llywelyn ap Gruffydd backed the rebellious Simon de Montfort against the English Crown, receiving several concessions from Simon if he were to succeed.<sup>15</sup> These events would cause the Marcher Lords to back Prince Edward, who had lost most of his land holdings to Llywelyn ap Gruffydd, increasing Edward’s prestige as well. The rebellion ended with the Treaty of Montgomery which solidified Llywelyn ap Gruffydd’s principality in Wales, giving him power over nearly the entire country of Wales, including all the lands that he had taken from

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<sup>13</sup> Powicke, 395-400.

<sup>14</sup> Powicke, 401-404.

<sup>15</sup> Morris, 58.

the Marcher Lords and Edward.<sup>16</sup>

From 1268 to 1276 the English and Welsh were able to maintain a relative peace, with only one major incident from 1268-1271 where Llywelyn ap Gruffydd battled against Gilbert of Clare to stop Gilbert from building a fortress at Caerphilly.<sup>17</sup> Edward I came to the crown in 1272 after the death of his father, and was crowned as he returned from crusading in the east learning of it at the end of 1272, and finally returning to England and receiving the crown and having the formal ceremony in 1274.<sup>18</sup> Internally, Wales faced its own rebellion, David, Llywelyn ap Gruffydd's younger brother, and Gruffydd ap Gwenwynwyn conspired against Llywelyn ap Gruffydd to replace him with David as ruler of the principality and greatly increase the power of Gruffydd in South Wales. After discovering this plot David and Gruffydd fled to England where they began a series of raids into central Wales.<sup>19</sup> This angered Llywelyn ap Gruffydd greatly for he blamed Edward I for the protection of his erstwhile kin.<sup>20</sup> At the same time tensions had been growing even before this between these two leaders, as Llywelyn refused to pay his debts that had been created in exchange for the recognition of his principality, and he had failed to acknowledge his vassalage to Edward I upon his coronation.<sup>21</sup> The king and prince made two separate attempts to meet each other, the first Edward was prevented by illness and the second Llywelyn claimed he felt unsafe in the court of Edward I since the latter was harboring his enemies. This insulted Edward as Llywelyn was implying that Edward's word was

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<sup>16</sup> Powicke, 404-406.

<sup>17</sup> Michael Prestwich, *Edward I* (London: Methuen London, 1988), 173-174.

<sup>18</sup> Prestwich, 82, 89-90.

<sup>19</sup> Powicke, 406-407.

<sup>20</sup> Morris, 103; Powicke, 407.

<sup>21</sup> Michael Prestwich, "Edward I and Wales," in *The impact of the Edwardian castles in Wales: the proceedings of a conference held at Bangor University, 7-9 September 2007*, ed. Diane M. Williams and John R. Kenyon (Oxford: Oxbow, 2010).

untrustworthy. The final act that would lead to the conflict between these two was Llywelyn's choice to marry Eleanor de Montfort, the late daughter of the rebellious Simon de Montfort that had sought to overthrow Henry III and had personally humiliated Edward during that conflict. This would lead Edward to send a final summons to Llywelyn or he would take the matter to parliament, so that he could declare war.<sup>22</sup>

Edward declared war at the end of 1276 after he tried to find a more peaceful solution to the conflict between himself and Llywelyn without having to change the balance of power with Llywelyn. While Edward had declared war in 1276 it didn't begin until the spring of 1277 with invasions in southern Wales led by lieutenants of the king. Edward quickly arrayed his forces and began his march into Wales as spring became summer. Edward understood the difficulty of traversing the Welsh countryside, and so began his process of building castles. During the muster he recruited hundreds of craftsmen and employed them as he marched into the Welsh territory. At the same time, Edward's southern push into Wales went much more smoothly, as the Welsh lords there either surrendered before the invasion began or fled before the English army.<sup>23</sup> With the war going well in the south Edward was left to deal with only the heartland of the rebellious prince's domain, and Llywelyn capitulated before Edward had to assault him in Snowdonia late in 1278. Edward's terms in the treaty of Conwy covered all the land that he conquered up to that point along with a payment plan for Llywelyn's principality and reparations.<sup>24</sup>

The next episode in the conflict between the English and the Welsh came in 1282. David, the younger brother of Llywelyn ap Gruffydd, led a revolt that reconquered much of the land that Edward so recently took. It took Edward until August to organize his forces and push back into

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<sup>22</sup> Morris, 136-142.

<sup>23</sup> Morris, 143-152.

<sup>24</sup> Powicke, 412-414.

Wales. As Edward pushed back into Wales, he changed his tact from previous invasions, he was going to conquer the entire country and replace it with his own officials. Edward after these initial conquests, after some encouragement by the bishop of Canterbury, sent terms to Llywelyn. These terms proposed to remove much of the power that was held by Llywelyn and David and were quickly rejected by the pair.<sup>25</sup> After terms were rejected Llywelyn attempted to invade southern Wales when the leader of Edward's forces in the region died but was unable to defeat these forces and was slain on the field of battle in December.<sup>26</sup> With Llywelyn dead the Welsh began losing their will to fight. David made one last stand, but Edward's forces eventually overran him, and he was taken by April of 1283. Eventually, the English forces captured David and they tried and executed him ending the last major revolt of the Welsh. By 1284 after having spent the better part of a year in Wales Edward announced his statute of Wales that would cover how the territory was to be governed.<sup>27</sup> He also began work at three new castles that were to cement his power in Wales, Conwy, Harlech and Caernarvon castles. Caernarvon was the castle that Edward believed most important, as it was well situated to be the seat of a new justiciar, and the city's past included an old Roman fort nearby, showing the heritage of this particular city, that Welsh legend had said was visited by the Roman Emperor Maximus, father of the Emperor Constantine. Edward had Caernarvon designed to resemble the walls of Constantinople to show its tie to that great city, and the heritage that came with it.<sup>28</sup>

Edward's government quashed a short outbreak of violence in 1287 in southern Wales while he was away in Gascony. His officials destroyed this rebellion quickly and determinedly

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<sup>25</sup> Powicke, 419-426.

<sup>26</sup> Morris, 184-186.

<sup>27</sup> Powicke, 428-430.

<sup>28</sup> Morris, 191-193.

but paved the way for the final Welsh rebellion in 1294-1295. This final revolt against Edward had captured his great unfinished castle at Caernarvon and had besieged his other grand castles, including Conwy. The rebellion came upon the backs of several other disasters felt by Edward in recent years. This Welsh rebellion came on the back of resentment towards Edward raising taxes and taxing the Welsh people, who did not themselves have a tradition of taxation. Edward moved with surprising and terrifying force, assembling nearly four times as many troops as he had in the rebellion in 1282. After facing early setbacks Edward was able to break the back of this last revolt, and finally secured Wales from revolt. This marks the final conflict between the Welsh and English in the Thirteenth Century, and Edward finally believed that he had secured his realm.<sup>29</sup>

The events that led up to the final full conquest of Wales in 1284 and the two subsequent revolts demonstrated to Edward the need to ensure safety and stability within this portion of his dominion. Having finally decided in 1284 that an independent Wales was no longer possible instead he chose to build his castles and colonize the last independent region. Edward I commissioned these castles to attempt to control the Welsh, and two of these castles, the ones Edward spent the most time in during his campaigns, Conwy and Caernarvon, have been chosen because Edward used these castles as residences during his time in Wales. There is a significance in the choice of where the king chooses to spend his time, and that his choice of these castles as residences mean that they were significant to his control of his new colonial holdings in Wales. While Edward built castles besides Conwy and Caernarvon, I have chosen these two because these castles had serious social and political ramifications, and that he used them both as residences.

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<sup>29</sup> Morris, 217; 275-280.

## Historiography of Edward I and Castle Building in Wales

The early historiography of Edward I and his castles tended to focus on the king and his actions which looked at these castles as part of the king's reign and not separately from it. More recently, the historiography has expanded to focus more on the wider implications of Edward's actions in Wales, and this paper falls within that latter group. Expanding on the specific historiography about Edward I and Wales more general investigations into medieval architecture, castle architecture and the use of castles in medieval society are included to expand the understanding of the castles and show how this paper fits into the wider historiography with its argument over how the building of castles in 1282 became an act of colonization.

Sir A.J. Taylor has several works used in this study, including two guidebooks, two journal articles and a chapter from an edited work. The journal articles titled "Master James of St. George" and "Castle Building in Thirteenth Century Wales and Savoy" provide the connections between the castle building in Savoy and Wales that draw to the conclusion that Master James of St. George was from Savoy, a region in North-Eastern France, and that he had brought other Savoyard's with him.<sup>30</sup> "The King's Works in Wales 1277-1330" and its appendix go into great detail the design, costs and issues with the construction of all the Royal castles constructed in Wales, and provides an invaluable resource, as both his interpretation of the primary text is included as well the primary text itself, placed within a footnote with the original Latin as a method to provide access to it to the reader.<sup>31</sup> Finally, his two guidebooks for Conwy and Caernarvon have a condensed version of information that is easy to access while also giving

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<sup>30</sup> A. J. Taylor, "Master James of St. George," *The English Historical Review* 65, no. 257 (1950); A. J. Taylor, "Castle-Building in Thirteenth-Century Wales and Savoy," *Proceedings of the British Academy* 63 (23 November 1977 1978).

<sup>31</sup> A. J. Taylor, "The King's Works in Wales 1277-1330," in *The History of the Kings Works: Volume I*, ed. H. M. Colvin, vol. 1 (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1976); A. J. Taylor, "Appendices to Chapter VI," in *The History of the Kings Works: Volume 2*, ed. H. M. Colvin, vol. 2 (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1976).



a full history of the castle's construction.<sup>32</sup>

Sir Maurice Powicke is one of the earliest and most important scholars on Edward I, as much of the later scholarship is indebted to and in conversation with his works. His first books included in this study is his two-volume work titled *King Henry III and the Lord Edward: The Community of the Realm in the Thirteenth Century*, which describes in detail the political history of England through an examination of the social lives of its subjects. For the conflict between Wales and England in this work he describes the legal conflict between the two kingdoms as being the primary motivator for war. He argues that it was the failure to define the relationship and Llywelyn ap Gruffydd's failure to realize that he could no longer follow the footsteps of his grandfather, and that the balance of power had shifted considerably.<sup>33</sup> In Powicke's following work released as a part of The Oxford History of England series called *The Thirteenth Century: 1216-1307*. In this book Powicke provides one of the best explanations for, and discussions around, the conflicts between England and Wales, and takes a thorough look at not only Edward I, but his rivals in Wales. Powicke even provides a striking amount of detail on the castles that Edward I built and his movements throughout his many visits to Wales. In this work Powicke describes the war of 1276 as inevitable as Llywelyn was unwilling to submit to English rule and Edward was unable to release Llywelyn in the current political climate. Powicke describes the war of 1282 having similar issues, that neither side was capable or willing to back down, and that Edward's change in tactics is a response to the aggression that he and his subjects viewed from

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<sup>32</sup> A. J. Taylor, *Caernarvon Castle and Town Walls, Gwynedd = Castell Caernarfon a muriau'r dref, Gwynedd*, 2nd ed. ed. (Cardiff: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1972); A. J. Taylor, *Conwy Castle and Town Walls*, 4th ed. ed. (Cardiff: Cadw: Welsh Historic Monuments, 1998).

<sup>33</sup> F. M. Powicke, *King Henry III and the Lord Edward: the Community of the Realm in the Thirteenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1947).

Llywelyn and the kingdom of Gwynedd.<sup>34</sup>

Michael Prestwich's *Edward* takes the same topical approach to the reign of Edward I but does consider the chronology by breaking his life into three separate eras: childhood and heir, his prime, and his later years. This topical approach allows Prestwich to examine specific moments in Edwardian history while best examining specific moments in his reign. Prestwich's work provides an excellent balance to Powicke and Morris as he bridges the gap between the examinations of Edward I in a modern and contemporary light. His descriptions of the castles are cursory but included to show the works that Edward was building.<sup>35</sup> Another work used in the understanding of the social effects of King Edward I's conquest of Wales is Ivor Bowen's *Statute of Wales*. This is a translation from Latin of the statutes Edward created for the governance of his newly conquered territories of Wales. The translation is invaluable as it provides a clarity to the documents released by the king. In Bowen's extensive introduction he describes the history of Welsh and English common law and puts into perspective Edward's Statute of Wales. While mention of the castles is missing, it is necessary for the understanding of the colonization process that Edward embarks upon.<sup>36</sup>

Abigail Wheatley provides another important perspective into understanding the castle and its existence outside of the defensive. In her book *The Idea of the Castle in Medieval England* Wheatly argues that the same mini architecture and ideas that are prevalent in the cathedral are also prevalent in the idea of what the castle represents. In this work Wheatley investigates the idea of the castle, and how it fits into the urban, spiritual and imperial settings. The third setting is the most important for this study, as it fits directly into the narrative of the

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<sup>34</sup> Powicke, *The Thirteenth Century, 1216-1307*.

<sup>35</sup> Prestwich.

<sup>36</sup> Ivor Bowen, *The Statutes of Wales* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1908).

castle being the center of a colonial endeavor.<sup>37</sup>

The next work is an edited collection of essays that all center around Edward I and Wales. Aptly named *Edward I and Wales*, this work provides an interesting addition to the historiography, as the editors designed them as a teaching tool. The article authors introduce the history, and then display the primary sources and follow it up with questions for the reader and explanations of the primary sources. These essays aid in understanding the impact of Edward I on Wales, through both the use of the primary sources and the questions afterwards to help the reader understand the effect Edward I had on Wales from a Welsh perspective.<sup>38</sup>

Nicola Coldstream provides three works to the understanding of this study, *Masons and Sculptors*, *Medieval Architecture*, and *The Decorated Style*. *Masons and Sculptors* seeks to dispel the myths around medieval masonry and provide the reader with a better understanding of the role of the Mason in the building works that they are attached to. She gives a full account of the mason's role in the construction of a project, and while she primarily focuses on the construction of cathedrals, Coldstream includes both Conwy and Caernarvon as examples in the work. Also, she describes that the construction techniques used by masons on cathedrals and castles are similar, only the timeframes vary.<sup>39</sup> In *Medieval Architecture* Coldstream argues that medieval architecture existed through to the sixteenth century and she describes how it evolves during the late medieval era. In this work she discusses both the use of symbolic architecture, and how it played a role in the construction of medieval structures, with a discussion of Caernarvon included as a major example.<sup>40</sup> Finally, *The Decorated Style: Architecture and*

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<sup>37</sup> Abigail Wheatley, *The Idea of the Castle in Medieval England*, Paperback ed. (York: York Medieval, 2015).

<sup>38</sup> Trevor Herbert, and Gareth Elwyn Jones, eds., *Edward I and Wales, Welsh History and Its Sources* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1993).

<sup>39</sup> Nicola Coldstream, *Masons and Sculptors* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991).

<sup>40</sup> Nicola Coldstream, *Medieval Architecture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

*Ornament* describes the evolution of decoration in architecture. She examines the origins of the architectural style called decorated that was identified originally by certain plans and window traceries, but Coldstream is expanding that style to include other works that have before now been excluded from being as a part of the style.<sup>41</sup> These works expand the understanding of the construction works carried out in medieval Europe, with the latter of the two works providing a better understanding of symbolic architecture and its possible application to colonial ideals.

Marc Morris' biography of Edward I, *A Great and Terrible King: Edward I and the Forging of Britain*. This work is one of the most important recent works to the understanding of Edward I. Morris takes the first full length approach to Edward I biography that takes a chronological view of Edward I. Morris is the beginning of the redemptive trend for Edward I, in that instead of taking a directly negative approach to Edward's entire life Morris describes Edward as being a strong ruler whose rule diminished by the end. Morris describes this diminishment as Edward having spent too many resources leading up to his invasion of Scotland and alienated too many of his nobles. This work provides an excellent narrative description of Edward's interactions, not only with Wales but provides necessary context that is lost in the more topical approaches. By including both Edward's many other problems alongside the Welsh entanglements he shows that Edward's many concerns outside Wales influenced the decisions he made with Wales.<sup>42</sup>

The final set of works are the proceeds from a conference titled *The Impact of the Edwardian Castles of Wales*. The first entry "Edward I and Wales" is a short narrative history of Edward I and Wales by Michael Prestwich, that provides the historical context to the rest of the

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<sup>41</sup> Nicola Coldstream, *The Decorated Style: Architecture and Ornament, 1240-1360* (London: Published for the Trustees of the British Museum by the British Museum Press, 1994).

<sup>42</sup> Morris.

papers from the conference and argues that the conquest of Wales is a major departure from previous actions between England and Wales.<sup>43</sup> The next entry “From Llywelyn ap Gruffudd to Edward I: Expansionist Rulers and Welsh Society in Thirteenth-Century Gwynedd” by David Stephenson compares the rule of Llywelyn ap Gruffydd and Edward I in their rule of the Welsh, as they both were conquerors of Welsh territories acknowledging that the castles built by Edward I were just one part of his conquest, but primarily compares Edward’s programs to Llywelyn ap Gruffydd.<sup>44</sup> David Longley’s “Gwynedd Before and After the Conquest” provides a narrative history of the Kingdom of Gwynedd, the ancestral home of Llywelyn ap Gruffydd, and the changes it faced from the Norman conquest of England to after Edward’s conquest of Wales.<sup>45</sup> Nicola Coldstream provides a new interpretation of a prominent architect in her paper “James of St. George” which seeks to explain the heights that this architect reached as his place has come into doubt due to new scholarship, it is unknown if the architect is the principal designer of the castles of Conwy and Caernarvon, but it is apparent that he was in charge of their construction.<sup>46</sup> Another prominent architect is covered in “The Life and Career of Richard the Engineer” by Rick Turner, this paper is a biography of another of the great architects that worked on the Edwardian Welsh castles seeking to demonstrate that it wasn’t just James of St. George who was

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<sup>43</sup> Prestwich, in *The impact of the Edwardian castles in Wales: the proceedings of a conference held at Bangor University, 7-9 September 2007*.

<sup>44</sup> David Stephenson, "From Llywelyn ap Gruffudd to Edward I: Expansionist Rulers and Welsh Society in Thirteenth-Century Gwynedd " in *The impact of the Edwardian castles in Wales: the proceedings of a conference held at Bangor University, 7-9 September 2007*, ed. Diane M. Williams and John R. Kenyon (Oxford: Oxbow, 2010).

<sup>45</sup> David Longley, "Gwynedd Before and After the Conquest," in *The impact of the Edwardian castles in Wales: the proceedings of a conference held at Bangor University, 7-9 September 2007*, ed. Diane M. Williams and John R. Kenyon (Oxford: Oxbow, 2010).

<sup>46</sup> Nicola Coldstream, "James of St. George," in *The impact of the Edwardian castles in Wales: the proceedings of a conference held at Bangor University, 7-9 September 2007*, ed. Diane M. Williams and John R. Kenyon (Oxford: Oxbow, 2010).

the prime motivator and architect of their construction.<sup>47</sup> Abigail Wheatly seeks in “Caernarfon Castle and Its Mythology” to expand and amend the works of Arnold Taylor in the understanding of Caernarvon castle and Edward’s manipulation of, and connection to Welsh mythology.<sup>48</sup> In “The King’s Accommodation at his Castles” Jeremy Ashbee examines the royal apartments of Edwardian Welsh castles and whether they are more of Savoyard or English design.<sup>49</sup> Peter Brears examines the service rooms of Conwy and Caernarvon castle to better understand how food supply and preparation were carried out in his paper “Food Supply and Preparation at the Edwardian Castles”.<sup>50</sup> Finally, Graham Lott in “The Building Stones of Edwardian Castles” examines where the English acquired the stones necessary to build their castles in Wales. Where these works all build on the importance and context of these castles, I differ in that my examination seeks to define the castle building works as the principal character of the colonization of this northern province of Wales.<sup>51</sup>

My scholarship aims to tie many of these elements together. Lott’s work with the stone sourcing builds into my examination of the resource location of the building of the two castles. The pair of papers on the architects Richard the Engineer and James of St. George both include

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<sup>47</sup> Rick Turner, "The life and Career of Richard the Engineer," in *The Impact of the Edwardian Castles in Wales: The Proceedings of a Conference Held at Bangor University, 7-9 September 2007*, ed. Diane M. Williams and John R. Kenyon (Oxford: Oxbow, 2010).

<sup>48</sup> Abigail Wheatley, "Caernarfon Castle and its Mythology," in *The impact of the Edwardian castles in Wales: the proceedings of a conference held at Bangor University, 7-9 September 2007*, ed. Diane M. Williams and John R. Kenyon (Oxford: Oxbow, 2010).

<sup>49</sup> Jeremy Ashbee, "The King’s Accomadation at his Castles," in *The impact of the Edwardian castles in Wales: the proceedings of a conference held at Bangor University, 7-9 September 2007*, ed. Diane M. Williams and John R. Kenyon (Oxford: Oxbow, 2010).

<sup>50</sup> Peter Brears, "Food Supply and Preparation at the Edwardian Castles," in *The impact of the Edwardian castles in Wales: the proceedings of a conference held at Bangor University, 7-9 September 2007*, ed. Diane M. Williams and John R. Kenyon (Oxford: Oxbow, 2010).

<sup>51</sup> Graham Lott, "The Building Stones of the Edwardian Castles," in *The impact of the Edwardian castles in Wales: the proceedings of a conference held at Bangor University, 7-9 September 2007*, ed. Diane M. Williams and John R. Kenyon (Oxford: Oxbow, 2010).

the building of Conwy and Caernarvon within their pages and provides another source to the construction of these castles. Wheatly provides an important social examination into the mythology surrounding Caernarvon that aids in the social importance and understanding of that castle. Finally, the works by Morris, Stephanson and Longley all provide important narrative examinations of the history of this region.

My combination of these works and their understanding of the actions of Edward I to argue that the action the English take in Wales is more akin to a colonial action and are precursors to later colonial endeavors by the English. By applying these works in this way, I demonstrate that the conquest of Wales in 1284 turns into a colonial action and not just a territorial conquest.

## CHAPTER 1

### MATERIALS, COSTS, AND LOCATION

Conwy and Caernarvon castles both began construction in 1283 after the conquest of Snowdonia and the fall of David ap Gruffydd as the last holdout of Welsh power.<sup>52</sup> The building works at Conwy had finished in 1287 but Caernarvon went unfinished until 1330, owing to a setback during the Welsh rebellion in 1294-95.<sup>53</sup> These two castles would occasionally be the home of Edward I and Conwy played an important part in Edward's reconquest of Wales during the reconquest of 1294-95.<sup>54</sup> When Edward left Conwy in 1283 the castle workers had just begun the process of its construction and the town they were building around it was just starting its ascent towards the sky. When Edward returned to put down the Welsh rebellion of 1294-95 the castle stood mighty upon its location, with Marc Morris describing Edward's possible thoughts and is used primarily as a bit of prose to show the significance of the construction of the castle built in under five years; "When and Edward some of his soldiers crossed the river to celebrate Christmas in the Castle's great hall, he may have reflected that it represented the best £15,000 he had ever spent."<sup>55</sup> The castle itself reflected the importance that Edward placed on his building program in Wales to help him keep control of the countryside. The Christmas celebration that Edward has at Conwy demonstrates an important function of the castle, that as a place for the king to display his royal authority. Any residence occupied by the king would necessarily require it to be suitably well-appointed for someone of his stature to stay in, and this extra expense would both increase the prestige of the castle and its importance to the English.

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<sup>52</sup> Powicke, *The Thirteenth Century, 1216-1307*, 430.

<sup>53</sup> Taylor, "The King's Works in Wales 1277-1330," in *The History of the Kings Works: Volume I*, 350, 391.

<sup>54</sup> Powicke, *The Thirteenth Century, 1216-1307*, 441-443.

<sup>55</sup> Morris, 277.



This chapter follows three parts for each castle: land choice and acquisition, material acquisition, and costs associated with the two castles. After the details for each castle have been laid out a comparison is made on these same criteria. The examination of these elements allows for a greater understanding of the scale of the material taken by Edward I to fortify his hold on Wales. The resources required to construct these two massive structures must have stretched the available stockpiled materials, so Edward's plan forced him to purchase additional materials and transport them from across his realm to Wales. These projects help to demonstrate the resource allocation necessary to form the colonies that Edward was creating. The investigation begins with Conwy castle since it was the first completed of the pair. This does not include a full account of all materials, as some records have been lost since the building of the castles, but what survives has been included. To better facilitate the locations mentioned throughout the thesis, I have added a pair of maps, Figures 1.1 and 1.2, as reference.

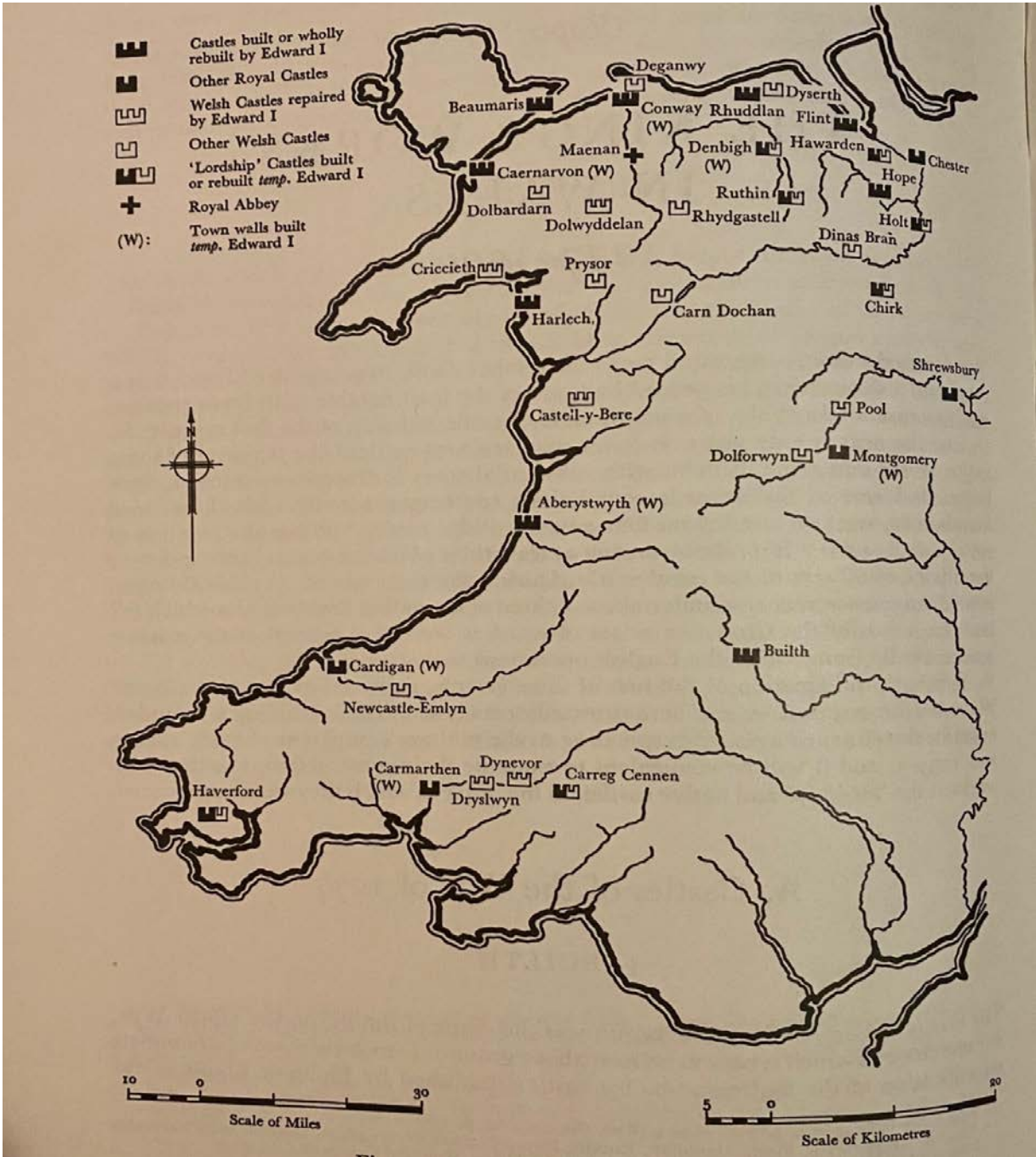
### Conwy Castle

Conwy Castle is seated on the original location of the Cistercian abbey of Aberconwy committed to St. Mary, the major abbey of Northern Wales and the final home of its great ruler Llywelyn ab Iorwerth.<sup>56</sup> Next to the abbey was the ancestral residency of the Welsh Princes of Gwynedd, and until recently, would have been occupied by the late Llywelyn ap Gruffydd. The choice of this land was not insignificant, as it had a prime position adjacent to the Conwy river, protected an easy navigable port and the abbey mill was able to use the tributary river Gyffin. Between Gyffin and the port stood a spur of rock where the builders sited the castle. Along with the coastal connections and the great site to build a castle and its corresponding town the location

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<sup>56</sup> Taylor, *Conwy Castle and Town Walls*, 2; Taylor, "The King's Works in Wales 1277-1330," in *The History of the Kings Works: Volume I*, 337.

also provided an ample amount of building stone for the castle. The site of this castle also had a symbolic significance, as it showed Edward supplanting the previous rulers of Wales, both by removing their buildings and the forced reburial of Llywelyn ab Iorwerth.



**Figure 1.1: Map of Edwardian Castles in Wales**

Source: Taylor, A. J. "The King's Works in Wales 1277-1330." In *The History of the Kings Works: Volume I*. Edited by H. M. Colvin. Vol. 1. London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1976. 294

Although it would cost Edward a fair amount to relocate the cathedral the political benefits must have outweighed this cost for him to choose to make this costly decision. The workers made immediate use of the abbey and began construction work for the residency used by the king's party.<sup>57</sup> While the rest of this was going on the work on the castle had begun.

The materials used by the castle builders came from a wide variety of sources throughout Wales and England. Fortunately, the location Edward selected offered plenty of stone for the base and walls. Edward and his engineers built the castle on a large stone outcrop and the castle used material from its base in its construction. For the more decorative areas of the castle masons travelled to the nearby Creuddyn peninsula. The masons would have to travel to the region around Chester, north of the castle, to retrieve the final red sandstone used in the construction of the castle. The purple sandstone used for bedding and leveling in places was brought by river from Ogwen or by cart from Llanfelynin.<sup>58</sup> The glasswork used in the castle chapel was brought in from Chester.<sup>59</sup> The nails and other ironwork for the castle originated mostly from Newcastle-under-Lyme, in the interior of England situated between modern-day Manchester and Birmingham, transported to Chester then sent downriver. The carpenters ferried in the timber for the castle from Trefriw and its surrounding region. Charcoal, sea-coal, and lead were supplied from the area around Flint and Whelston. Charcoal was required for the creation of lime, sea-coal for the forging of tools and lead for the roofing of the castle. Furthermore, the chamberlain's account lists tin as shipped from Chester and Boston, with Chester also providing rope for the

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<sup>57</sup> Taylor, "The King's Works in Wales 1277-1330," in *The History of the Kings Works: Volume I*, 337-338.

<sup>58</sup> Lott, in *The impact of the Edwardian castles in Wales: the proceedings of a conference held at Bangor University, 7-9 September 2007*, 115.

<sup>59</sup> Taylor, *Conwy Castle and Town Walls*, 11.

construction of the castle.<sup>60</sup> The massive array of resources brought in from throughout England combined with locally acquired resources is a prime example of the early stages of colonization. What this shows is that the English needed certain materials from that they could not acquire locally, and so had them brought to their works, paralleling colonial movements of later centuries.

The castle itself was not cheap to build, as materials and labor were expensive. Overall, the cost of construction for the castle came to nearly £14,500 for castle and town walls over the course of the years 1283-1287. These funds were provided by taxation of currently controlled provinces throughout England and the holdings maintained in mainland Europe.<sup>61</sup> While the price tag does not seem particularly impressive it bears in mind that when Edward was preparing to go on crusade, he was lent £17,000 by Louis XI. Edward would have to repay this amount from the revenue he received in customs from Bordeaux over a twelve-year period.<sup>62</sup> In more local terms, a mason was paid a little over £8 to build 142 arrow-slits.<sup>63</sup> The £14,500 spent by Edward I on this castle is spent in three large waves, signifying the different building phases that the castle went through, and the time it took for Edward to raise the necessary funds. The first wave of payments between 1283 and the end of 1284 was a sum of £5,819 paid by the keeper of the Royal Wardrobe to the builders John of Candover and Master James of St. George for the works on the castle in Conwy. Unfortunately, this set of payments no longer have the surviving

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<sup>60</sup> The chamberlains account listing created by A.J. Taylor where these numbers originate was created by using the Conway Particulars available from the National Archives.

<sup>61</sup> Taylor, "The King's Works in Wales 1277-1330," in *The History of the Kings Works: Volume I*, 338; 346-349; 350.

<sup>62</sup> Morris, 89.

<sup>63</sup> Taylor, "The King's Works in Wales 1277-1330," in *The History of the Kings Works: Volume I*, 345.

specific expenditures, but later years do.<sup>64</sup> The next building season would cost another £3,313 and here the archives still maintain some records on how the builders spent this money. The receipts available for the construction of the chambers of the King and Queen cost a total of £420, £320 of which paid for the masonry work done and the remaining paid for the carpentry.<sup>65</sup> The expenses here, like the actual resources used above, show the massive amount of resources being applied to the securing of the conquest of Wales. Many of these funds were applied to the town walls, creating a safe zone for the English who would be moving to Conwy.

The second wave of payments by the Royal Wardrobe amounted to £3,313 for the 1284-1285 building season. The records for this season are also more intact. This year the chamberlain lists the contract work at costing £731, the purchase of goods at £315 and the cost of moving these goods at another £105. As for the goods themselves, the chamberlain's account broke down their individual costs, quantities brought, and the transport expense down even further. The manifest lists 19 tons of charcoal and 524 tons of sea-coal costing £10 and £13 respectively and a total cost of £42 to ship. 140 carrats of lead purchased at £182 cost £14 to transport. The builders purchased iron at £44 for 70 pieces and it cost them £2 to transport it. The chamberlain lists a purchase of 500 pounds of tin and 125,000 nails at £3 and £10 respectively. The purchase of unspecified quantities of rope for the building of the castle at a cost of £12 with no transport costs listed. The chamberlains account lists 13,500 shingles, 11,644 boards, and 2,000 poles purchased for a total of £12. Scaffolding of various styles and "other items" purchased at £9 and £6 respectively. The carriage costs of moving 106 tons of sand was £34.<sup>66</sup> We know that other resources were required for the construction of the castle but the receipts for those resources are

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<sup>64</sup> Taylor, "The King's Works in Wales 1277-1330," in *The History of the Kings Works: Volume I*, 341.

<sup>65</sup> Taylor, "The King's Works in Wales 1277-1330," in *The History of the Kings Works: Volume I*, 344.

<sup>66</sup> Taylor, "The King's Works in Wales 1277-1330," in *The History of the Kings Works: Volume I*, 349.

for the most part missing, besides one document showing that some food was being resourced from Ireland.<sup>67</sup> This listing only accounts for one year of purchases, but it does provide a window into what the costs associated with different materials and their transport was. Other costs listed in the manifest are the payment to a mason of £64 for the creation of openings, doorways, corbels and six perches in the castle well. As listed earlier Master James of St. George paid £8 a different mason for arrow slits, and Master James paid him 25 shillings to work 250 dressed stones and provide windows and doors for the castle. This mason also received £10 to prepare the rock below the castle and a further £14 to build a wall to this rock and place a turret on top of it. The Master James of St. George paid £104 to a group of masons build a tower upstream from the previous one and connect it to the castle.<sup>68</sup> The demonstration of various expenses here is to show the variety of works that the castle builders were completing. This also provides a better understanding of what the wage portion of the construction costs actually paid for. This accounting of who was being paid for what also provides for an understanding of who these builders were, and the breakdown for what these men were doing. By understanding the minutiae of the workers, we can better understand this first wave of temporary colonists and how their existence could possibly be shaping the expectations of the Welsh in the local area.

The final major works season from the end of 1286 to the end of 1287 required further expenditure of almost £2,000. The following year the builders spent only £240 and the following year they spent £19, showing that most of the work on the castle was completed by this point. These expenditures show how much it cost for the building of this castle, and the purchase account of 1286 provides a wonderful deep dive into the castle's construction and the cost of

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<sup>67</sup> *Roll of Victuals Provided in Ireland for Welsh Castles E 101/232/21* (1296).

<sup>68</sup> Taylor, "The King's Works in Wales 1277-1330," in *The History of the Kings Works: Volume I*, 344-345.

materials. In many cases the costs of shipping these materials made a great contribution to the total costs of the works, as approximately a quarter of the total expenses of the materials in this year was spent on shipping said materials.<sup>69</sup> In this record the physical supplies for the building of the castle itself are present so it is unknown what the exact costs were or where they were brought from for the food and other supplies that must have needed to have been kept on hand for the workers who worked on this project. But overall, this information provides a much better picture of the costs and materials associated with the building of Conwy Castle.

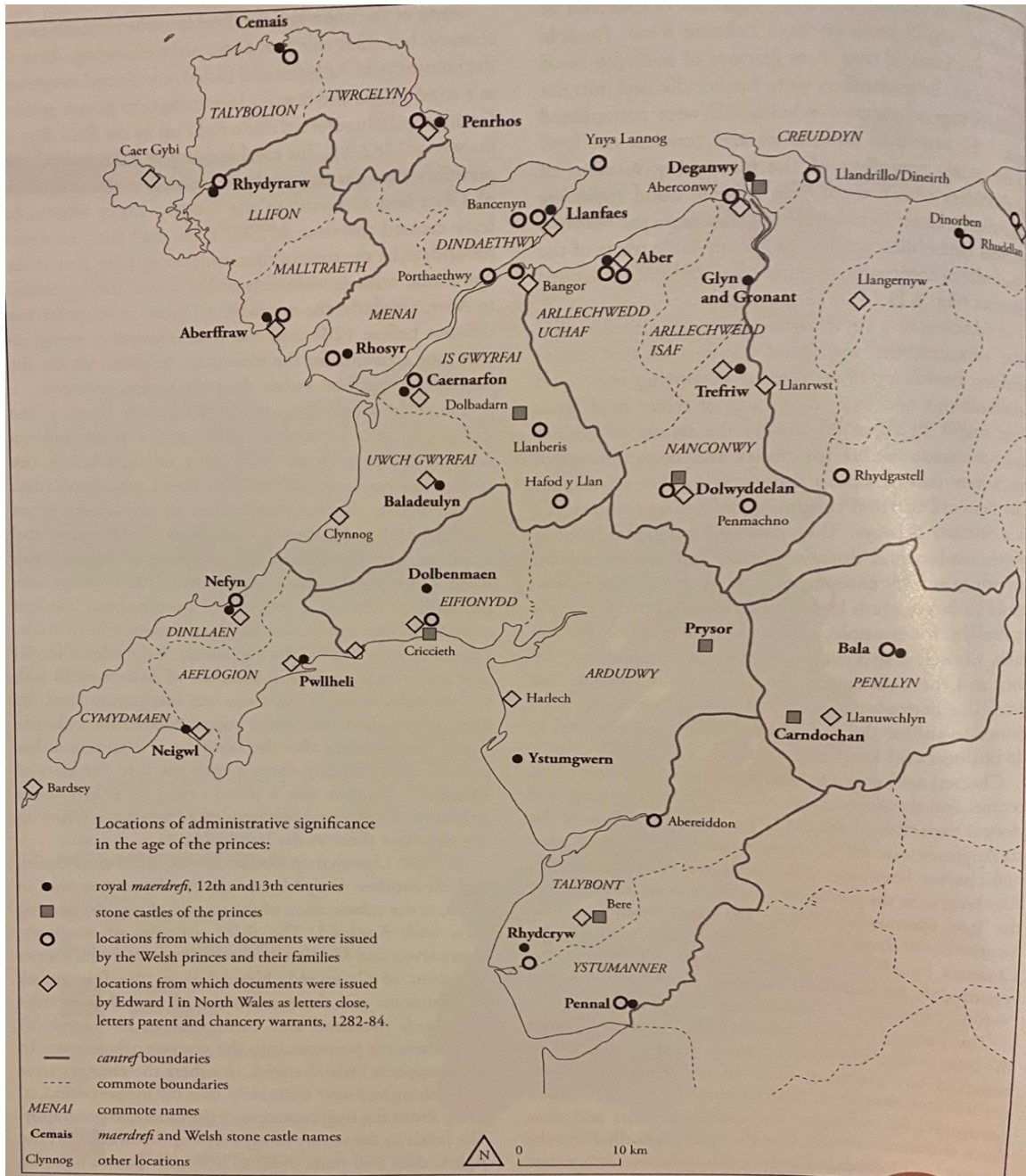
The resources applied to the construction of Conwy Castle show a few things about the colonial program that this castle was going to be the protector of. The movement of resources, those that could be found locally and those that needed to be brought in mirror the creation of colonies in later eras. The monetary costs demonstrate a very similar narrative, but it shows how the money used in the castle building process is spent, with most of the costs associated with colonial expeditions being the people themselves, and not the materials used in their construction.

### Caernarvon Castle

The site, and style of the construction that Edward chose for Caernarvon placed the seat of his governance of northern Wales within a historical context beyond just his conquest and demonstrated his rule of Wales as being right. An explanation for the social meaning of the castle's construction is included in the third chapter and is outside of the scope of its physical construction. However, the one portion of the design did affect the construction, as Caernarvon castle was built with banded walls instead of monochromatic walls that were the norm.

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<sup>69</sup> Taylor, "The King's Works in Wales 1277-1330," in *The History of the Kings Works: Volume I*.



**Figure 1.2: Map of Northern Wales, shows maerdrefi and places where charters were signed by the Gwynedd dynasty in the twelfth and thirteenth century (and itinerary of Edward I, in 128-84) These sites show the location of places of administrative significance. Taken for locations portrayed in the map**

Source: Longley, David. "Gwynedd before and after the Conquest." In *The Impact of the Edwardian Castles in Wales: The Proceedings of a Conference Held at Bangor University, 7-9 September 2007*. Edited by Diane M. Williams and John R. Kenyon. Oxford: Oxbow, 2010. 22

Building of the castle began in June of 1283 when Edward I ordered eleven shiploads of



timber sent from Rhuddlan to Caernarvon.<sup>70</sup> More timber was sent from Chester as they needed it to build the housing for Edward and Eleanor who were travelling there from Conwy Castle. They needed more timber to construct the palisade that would protect the royal housing and the builders requested more timber from Liverpool, Rhuddlan, Conwy and Bangor.<sup>71</sup> Unlike at Conwy castle there are no surviving expenditure lists that show the exact location where many of the materials used in the building of Caernarvon are from it is likely that they would have originated in similar places. The stone used in the castle too came from further afield than at Conwy. One of the first works carried out by the castle builders was construction of a quay to bring in many of the heavier materials used in the castles construction.<sup>72</sup> Edward chose to build Caernarvon on stone unsuitable for the walls itself, and thus the builders had to ship stone in from elsewhere. The chief builders must have acquired the limestone used in the castle's construction from northern Wales, possibly either from Anglesey or the Menai Strait. Vaynol or Penmon regions likely provided the sandstone used in the castle's construction. The masons purchased and shipped the granite blocks used in the castle from Ireland. The provenance of the red sandstone used in the castle's construction is not known, but there are places in the castle that may have recycled some stone from the Roman fort Segontium, physically connecting the castle to its Roman predecessor. The Roman fort Segontium still stands currently, and chemical analysis done by Lott shows that some of the stone used in the castle's construction comes from there.<sup>73</sup>

While we know what materials, the builders required for the building of the castles from

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<sup>70</sup> Taylor, "The King's Works in Wales 1277-1330," in *The History of the Kings Works: Volume I*, 323.

<sup>71</sup> Taylor, "The King's Works in Wales 1277-1330," in *The History of the Kings Works: Volume I*, 372.

<sup>72</sup> Taylor, *Caernarvon Castle and Town Walls, Gwynedd = Castell Caernarfon a muriau'r dref, Gwynedd*, 7.

<sup>73</sup> Lott, in *The impact of the Edwardian castles in Wales: the proceedings of a conference held at Bangor University, 7-9 September 2007*, 117.

the extensive records about Conwy. Unfortunately, the records of the location that these materials were brought from for Caernarvon castle is unknown, we can make some assumptions about where the materials come from where Conwy acquired its materials. Newcastle-under-Lyme would be the location where much of the metalwork originated from and that region. It would also be safe to assume that since Caernarvon was already receiving its timber resources by boat from Liverpool other materials necessary for its construction would travel a similar route if they could not be sourced closer to the castle, such as some timber, stone and sand was based on available receipts. Another surviving record shows stone, coal and timber brought by boat to Caernarvon. A surviving record indicates that the constable of Bristol castle purchased lead there and sent it to Caernarvon.<sup>74</sup> These few known material locations however still provide a better understanding of the routes taken for materials available at the castle. Knowing that Edward is having his constables purchase the materials necessary for the construction of his castle, that probably this is not the only instance of this, and other constables are purchasing and sending supplies as well. This provides another avenue to the understanding of the colonization of Wales, as these materials were being gathered to promote the construction of Edward's castles, this proves like later colonial efforts as promoters for the colonies would gather and send supplies.

Although the material purchases do not have surviving records there are some wage and expenditure records still available. The earliest of these records shows the keeper of the Wardrobe allocating an amount of nearly £9,500 for the building of Welsh castles. As the keeper of the Wardrobe lists Conwy separately in the records the scholar A. J. Taylor assumes that Conwy would have received a small share if any from this larger sum and that Caernarvon would

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<sup>74</sup> Taylor, "The King's Works in Wales 1277-1330," in *The History of the Kings Works: Volume I*, 375. The records used by Taylor for these numbers are expenditure documents available in the British National Archives.

have received the largest part, totaling some £5,000.<sup>75</sup> The first available accounting of money, found by A. J. Taylor, spent specifically on Caernarvon castle comes in the records running from August 1284 to November 1285. Here the account reveals an expenditure of approximately £3,040, of this £1,818 was spent on the building of the wall. Although this does not directly relate to the building of the castle it does provide approximate costs for wall building and wage numbers. Wages included in this period are a total of £1,575 paid as wages for the construction of the town's wall. The architects spent another £440 on bringing stone, freestone, coal and timber to the works. The managers of this project would slow the building works at the castle itself so that workers could complete the town's walls. For instance, £346 were paid to workers at the castle with materials costing a further £471. The next two years the individual costs are not available, but we do know that £1,773 was spent in the 1286 season and £1,379 was spent in the 1287 season. This was the last major expenditure on the castle until after the Welsh rebellion of 1294-1295. This rebellion would set fire to the town and castle and destroy the town walls. Once Edward's officials put down the rebellion work would resume at the castle. The royal officials paid out £170 in the first month of work most of which they paid in wages. Payments totaling some £4,393 for the following four-year period's work on the castle at Caernarvon. Work then ceases on the castle while Edward prosecutes his war against Scotland from 1299 to 1304.<sup>76</sup> Work would continue in minor amounts throughout the following few decades, but this goes beyond the scope of this study. The total cost for the building of Caernarvon up to 1299 was £12,308, but at this point it is only mostly complete, and still requires some renovation after Edward's war in Scotland to be completed.<sup>77</sup> Like Conwy castle, the expenditure of physical and

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<sup>75</sup> Taylor, "The King's Works in Wales 1277-1330," in *The History of the Kings Works: Volume I*, 373.

<sup>76</sup> Taylor, "The King's Works in Wales 1277-1330," in *The History of the Kings Works: Volume I*, 374-384.

<sup>77</sup> Taylor, "Appendices to Chapter VI," in *The History of the Kings Works: Volume 2*, 1029.

monetary resources demonstrate the expansion of English power, and how they spent their resources to build the defenses for what would become the English colonies in Wales.

### Conclusion

As I have demonstrated in the above sections on Conwy and Caernarvon castles with discussions about the resources used, and costs acquired by the castles that they both were highly expensive affairs. One of the most important things that comes from this study is the connections between Conwy and Caernarvon castles. Both castles racked up an impressive total in costs between them, totaling over £27,000 during their construction. Only one other castle matches these costs, Beaumaris castle, which Edward constructed in response to the Welsh riots of 1294-1295.<sup>78</sup> Where Conwy was built rapidly Caernarvon took much longer to build even though the sizes of the castles were relatively similar. The increased length of building is explained by the differences in their location relative to the stone that was used to construct them. Political differences in the motivation for the building of these castles was also apparent, as Edward needed Conwy castle as a protectorate against invasion into England where Caernarvon was being built as the seat of government. Unfortunately, the particular expenditures for Caernarvon are missing, but what we can see shows that these castles were both significant expenditures that pulled from resources both close to their building sites and further away, such as Ireland and Liverpool. The sections on Conwy and Caernarvon show the interconnectedness of the resources used in the building of the castles and their costs. These expenditures of resources and money to build castles and their connected towns is the preparatory stage for the colonial movement that would arrive once the builders completed the castles. Colonial endeavors would continue to be

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<sup>78</sup> Taylor, "Appendices to Chapter VI," in *The History of the Kings Works: Volume 2*, 1029.

massive expenditures. The demonstration of the combination of local and external resources also helps show the parallels between later colonial endeavors where manufactured goods had to be brought in from the parent nation.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE BUILDERS

The building of a castle is more than just the stones, timber and nails that make up its imposing structure. The workers who construct the castle are just as much a part of its creation as the stones that made it. Edwardian castles in Wales are no stranger to this and they have some key figures that make up their construction, and Conwy and Caernarvon see the most prominent of these figures. While there are many men named in various receipts and documents two stand out more than any other in their prominence in the building of these castles, Master James of St. George and Richard the Engineer. These two men together saw the complete construction of the fortifications at Conwy take less than five years. They were also prominent throughout the other construction enterprises that Edward I made while he was building his castles throughout Wales, and into his building program in Gascony and his invasion of Scotland. In this chapter I examine two of the men who appear in the histories of the castles Conwy and Caernarvon, discussing where they are from and the castles they worked on. I focus on the works related to Conwy and Caernarvon, but they both worked at other castles, especially during the castle building phase that began in 1277. A map has been included (figure 2.1) to better illuminate the locations and distances traveled by these workers.

After examining the named individuals and their relation to the castle and their prominence within the history of the castles this study then discusses the locales that the hundreds of masons, carpenters, smiths and other workers are recorded as coming from. By understanding the workers and where they are from this chapter shows the expansiveness of Edward's rule and the energy and manpower that King Edward I applied to his castles Conwy and Caernarvon. This exhibition of manpower provides the earliest point for the colonization of

Wales. These workers would have spent the majority of the castle's building period stationed near their worksite and forced them and the local Welsh into contact.



**Figure 2.1: Map of England and Wales showing the locations mentioned in the text for the purposes of showing distances traveled.**

These builders would be the first wave of colonists that arrived in Wales, even if many of them would only be there temporarily while they built the castles. To begin this examination discusses the two most prominent figures of Master James of St. George and Richard the Engineer, followed by a discussion of the locales that the workers hailed from. The focus on Master James has to do with the imperialistic nature of his existence as a part of the workforce and his prominence in it, and the inclusion of Richard the Engineer is to counterbalance the foreign builder with the highest domestic builder, who lived on the frontier between England and Wales, and would have been familiar with dealing with both the Welsh and English.

### Master James of St. George

The most prominent mason, builder, and architect of Edward's castles both in and outside of Wales was James of St. George. James reached high status and fortune uncommon to the average mason in the thirteenth century. His career with Edward I began sometime late in 1277 or early 1278 when Edward I hired him and sent him to Wales to work on Edward's first stage of castles there.<sup>79</sup> But his career as described by A. J. Taylor began in Savoy where he worked for Count Phillip on many of his castles in the region by noting how the castles that were built in possible connection to James in Savoy have many similarities to the castles of Conway and Harlech in Wales. This provenance helps in the understanding for why Edward chose Master James as his Master of Works. He was recruited to the service of King Edward I for his previous experience and expertise, though the actual method of recruitment of James is shrouded.<sup>80</sup>

James' work under King Edward began just after the war of 1277, which marked first

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<sup>79</sup> Coldstream, in *The impact of the Edwardian castles in Wales: the proceedings of a conference held at Bangor University, 7-9 September 2007*, 37-38.

<sup>80</sup> Taylor, "Castle-Building in Thirteenth-Century Wales and Savoy," 275-283.



forays into castle building in the region. James is known to have worked on at least Flint and Rhuddlan castles as he appears frequently in the roles there. Primarily Master James appeared in the roles at castle Rhuddlan supervising the works there as the castle was under construction from 1278 to 1280. It appears that Edward transferred him to work on Flint castle from 1280 to 1282. The next record showed Edward I conferring to Master James a payment of 3 shillings a day for life and half this to James' wife Ambrosia after his death, for the work that he did in the service of the king. His next assignment was to repair Aberystwyth after the Welsh took it in their uprising of 1282. From there Edward required him to travel to a variety of castles as a consultant on their works and repairs. King Edward I then assigned James to the abbey that he was having relocated at Aberconwy to make way for Conwy Castle. Next Master James of St. George appeared on the records as the Master of Operations at the castles Conwy, Caernarvon, Harlech, and Criccieth. From 1287 to 1290 Edward brought Master James with him to Gascony to consult on the castles that Edward was building there. The final record of the works that Master James was attached to in Wales is the building of the castle Beaumaris and during this time he receives the manor of Mostyn in Flintshire.<sup>81</sup>

It is possible to look closer at the works Master James of St. George was in direct control of at Conway castle, where records mention him many times either being paid for works himself or hiring others to perform tasks on the castle. To begin, the Royal Wardrobe records the money paid for the work at the castle in 1284 directly to Master James, which is unique for the listings within the Royal Wardrobe. Other instances of his prominence in the castle's works is James is recorded several times assigning and paying for various tasks such as a payment to a Master Henry of Oxford for work on a staircase in the king's chambers. Master James was not just a

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<sup>81</sup> Taylor, "Master James of St. George."

director of works however, he was also assigned task work such as his construction of doorways and embrasures in the king's chambers.<sup>82</sup> It becomes clear that while James did not do much of the work himself, he does appear to be the master organizer of Edward's works in Wales. Those who worked for him were primarily of English decent, though he had brought a few other Savoyards with him when he was brought to England.<sup>83</sup> James' position as master mason at the sight cannot be doubted, as Nicola Coldstream argues in *Masons and Sculptors* that the master mason of the building work would inevitably leave more of a record than his subordinates, and the largest record from documents available through the work of A. J. Taylor shows that James of St. George is at Conwy castle from before construction begins until it is finished in 1287. His time at the worksite for Caernarvon castle can only be guessed, but he was named master of the building works when the castles were commissioned.<sup>84</sup> This shows another side to the colonial nature of the construction of Edward's castles in Wales, his imported chief organizer provided a directly loyal link to the king, ensuring that what he worked on was directly what the king commanded. The colonizers would have their castles and towns built by a master mason, providing an image of stability to the colonies. While Master James of St. George is a prominent figure in the building of the Edwardian castles at Conwy and Caernarvon he was not the only one, and Richard the Engineer held a prominent role as well.

### Richard the Engineer

The other figure that plays a major role in the construction of Conwy and Caernarvon is

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<sup>82</sup> Taylor, "The King's Works in Wales 1277-1330," in *The History of the Kings Works: Volume I*, 337-349.

<sup>83</sup> Coldstream, in *The impact of the Edwardian castles in Wales: the proceedings of a conference held at Bangor University, 7-9 September 2007*, 37-44.

<sup>84</sup> Coldstream, *Masons and Sculptors*, 16-17; Taylor, "The King's Works in Wales 1277-1330," in *The History of the Kings Works: Volume I*, 374.

Richard the Engineer, who's existence appears in several documents available from the exchequer in charge of keeping up with the works, as well as records available in Chester for his time there. Unlike Master James who was from Savoy, Richard was an Englishman who lived in Chester. He would have been intimately familiar with the king's works as Chester was another region held directly by the king. Richard was a master carpenter who saw much work in Edward's castles in Wales. Richard was not just a carpenter, but he also planned castles, built bridges and made siege engines. While Richard's primary focus was carpentry, he was also a mason who took both private and public works in both masonry and carpentry. The earliest known projects that we find Richard leading the works at Chester castles, working for Edward before he became king.<sup>85</sup> In Wales Richard was placed in charge of the building of the castles Flint and Rhuddlan in 1277 while Master James of St. George remained in Edward's court.<sup>86</sup> From Flint and Rhuddlan Richard is lost for a time until he reappears making repairs at Caergwle castle. From Caergwle he is sent to Anglesey where he oversaw the building of the pontoon boat bridge that would allow Edward's forces to push the Welsh out of Bangor. In 1283 Richard is next found at Conwy and Caernarvon acting as the second-in-command under Master James of St. George. Master James sent him from Conwy to Chester and Newcastle-under-Lyme to procure tools and the workmen necessary for the castle works at Conwy. Upon his return to Conwy Richard and another carpenter Henry of Oxford would be responsible for the wood works within the royal residency portions of the castle. After working on Conwy Richard would return to Chester for several years before returning to royal service alongside Master James of St.

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<sup>85</sup> Turner, in *The Impact of the Edwardian Castles in Wales: The Proceedings of a Conference Held at Bangor University, 7-9 September 2007*, 45.

<sup>86</sup> A. J. Taylor, *The Welsh castles of Edward I* (London: Hambledon, 1986), 17-18; Coldstream, in *The impact of the Edwardian castles in Wales: the proceedings of a conference held at Bangor University, 7-9 September 2007*, 41-42.

George for the beginning of the construction project of Beaumaris castle. After Edward's invasion of Scotland, Richard would be placed in charge of repairs of English castles in Wales, where his handiwork appears at Flint and Rhuddlan castles.<sup>87</sup> The career of Richard is a good comparison career to that of Master James as well as an example of what other master craftsmen's actions and careers would have looked like. He appears in the records acquiring tools and workmen and is shown building and designing pieces of the two castles. Finally, he worked as a siege engine designer, showing the range of works that he undertook as service to King Edward I. From Richard the Engineer and Master James of St. George let us move on to examine the locales from which the workmen hailed as they were brought together to work on Edward's castles. Richard the Engineer was the second to Master James and would have performed well as a liaison between the foreign Master of Works and the English workmen. He also would have been more intimately knowledgeable about the locale, as he was from Chester which sat close to the border between England and Wales.

### The Workmen

While the likes of Master James of St. George and Richard the Engineer were prominent figures in the construction of the Edwardian castles in Wales these master masons were by far the minority in the building of the castles, and Edward's lieutenants brought in hundreds of workers to make the rapid construction of these castles possible. While work on Caernarvon took much longer than Conwy it still finished most of its building work within five years of works starting there. While the records for Conwy and Caernarvon castles are lacking in many cases for the number and locale of the workers who would be at these castles this study is taking a wider

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<sup>87</sup> Turner, in *The Impact of the Edwardian Castles in Wales: The Proceedings of a Conference Held at Bangor University, 7-9 September 2007*, 46-51.

look and including the other castles that were constructed, from the 1277 batch there are Builth, Aberystwyth, Flint, and Rhuddlan castles. The 1282 batch of castles include Conwy, Caernarvon, and Harlech castles, with Beaumaris being added in 1295 after the Welsh rebellion. By adding the castles that Edward built it should provide a more accurate description of the types and locales of workers that were brought to Wales. The work season would continue from February to November, and they would work from sunrise to sunset. Workers would most likely have received food alongside wages and would probably have been clothed by their contractors. They would have stayed on site, and one of the earliest buildings built during the construction of these castle would have been somewhere to house them, if a building did not already exist.<sup>88</sup>

Before diving deeper into the English workers who were brought to Wales it would be prudent to discuss those workers that Master James of St. George brought with him from Savoy. He brought a small group that included a military engineer, several carpenters and masons, and a painter, all of whom would feature prominently in the building of Conway, Caernarvon, Rhuddlan, and Harlech castles where they provided their services to the construction of these castles, and are featured in the records. The records including these men by name provides the apparent importance of their work alongside those Englishmen who are mentioned in the surviving texts, showing a clear tier difference between the master craftsmen and the others working on the castles. There were clearly different levels of craftsmen brought to work on the castle, the master mason would have both carried out work himself, while managing some number of masons to ensure that the work was carried out in an efficient manner.<sup>89</sup>

The 1277 castles show a wide array of workers secured by the English to work on their

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<sup>88</sup> Coldstream, *Masons and Sculptors*, 18.

<sup>89</sup> Taylor, "Appendices to Chapter VI," in *The History of the Kings Works: Volume 2*, 1036-1040.

construction. Our best method of judging the range of where workers were brought from are the listings of those few who are named in the castle's records. From Builth the records show workers coming from the March Lands and Chester. The March Lands would have been in Wales itself, and workers from Chester are alongside the military forces as the invasion pushes in. Lands further away included Shropshire, Hereford, Leominster and Brecon which were all located east of Wales and apparently provided a bulk of the labor, most traveled upwards of thirty miles and would have created temporary colonies for their work before returning home when they had finished their work. From Aberystwyth we learn that Somerset, Dorset, Wiltshire, and Gloucestershire counties along with the town of Bristol all provided labor to that castle in its construction and would have traveled between one-hundred and thirty to over two-hundred miles to their work. The numbers of workers on the castles also varied greatly, at Builth and Aberystwyth the number of workers was relatively few. Builth never had the high number of workers at it some of the other castles do, it started with a small number of carpenters and diggers, with an equivalent number of masons added to the castles works, peaking at some one hundred and forty people. Aberystwyth had a much larger contingent of laborers, recruiting two hundred and masons and carpenters at the outset of its construction. Added to this tally were nine smiths, nine quarrymen and twenty-four general workmen at the peak of its construction.<sup>90</sup>

Flint's records provide an even wider array and better understanding of where the workers came from as this castle's workers were first arrayed with the king at Chester in military style regiments and followed behind the army as they pushed into Wales. Here we learn that workers were recruited from Leicester, Lincoln, Nottingham, Warwick, Stafford, Lancaster, and of course Chester. These workers on average travelled over eighty miles to Chester before being

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<sup>90</sup> Taylor, "The King's Works in Wales 1277-1330," in *The History of the Kings Works: Volume I*, 293-308.

relocated the final thirteen miles to Flint. Other workers were brought from Boston and South Lincolnshire that travelled one-hundred and sixty or more miles to reach the works at Flint. Work at Rhuddlan was carried out by many of the same workers who would arrive at Flint as the workers there were split between the two castles as these two castles were built to provide defense against Welsh incursions into the region surrounding Chester. Here the texts referenced by A.J. Taylor show that a massive number of workers were recruited for the works at Flint and Rhuddlan.<sup>91</sup> At these castles nine hundred and seventy diggers were recruited alongside three hundred and thirty carpenters, three hundred and twenty wood workers, two hundred masons, 12 smiths and 10 charcoal burners.<sup>92</sup> This was nearly quadruple those recruited for the southern castles built by Edward and shows the focus of his construction being there.

The next group of castles are those built in 1282 at Conwy, Caernarvon and Harlech. Conwy's exact number of workers is not known but some specifics are available. Early provisions were made to bring in one hundred diggers and two hundred woodcutters from Chester along with an unspecified number of masons and quarrymen. From Newcastle-under-Lyme smiths and other workmen were recruited, traveling over eighty miles to their worksites.<sup>93</sup> At Harlech the peak employment was nine hundred and fifty workers, two hundred and twenty masons, one hundred ten quarriers, thirty smiths, twenty carpenters and five hundred and fifty laborers worked on the castle. Where these workers are from is not given but a few records show workers from Radwell, Eccleshall, Frankby, Turvey and Thornton providing at least some listed workers in one of the surviving accounts of taskwork completed in the year 1289. These workers travelled anywhere from ninety to two-hundred miles to work on these castles and would have

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<sup>91</sup> Taylor, "The King's Works in Wales 1277-1330," in *The History of the Kings Works: Volume I*, 309-327.

<sup>92</sup> Taylor, "The King's Works in Wales 1277-1330," in *The History of the Kings Works: Volume I*, 309.

<sup>93</sup> Taylor, "The King's Works in Wales 1277-1330," in *The History of the Kings Works: Volume I*, 337-342.

formed temporary colonies while working on the castle.<sup>94</sup> At Caernarvon early work was carried out by twenty laborers and forty carpenters to build the necessities to protect the works. Thirty masons were ordered from Shropshire and Staffordshire, approximately ninety miles, to begin the early stonework, but much of the early work does not have specific numbers of workers mentioned. The repair work done in 1295 however lists seventy masons, twenty quarriers, ten carpenters, ten smiths and one hundred and eighty laborers being paid for repair work on the wall, and this number of workers would rise to five hundred and fifty.<sup>95</sup>

The final castle, Beaumaris built in 1296 required much larger numbers of workers, requesting four hundred masons and two thousand laborers for its construction. Many of these laborers and masons would be brought from Chester but they too would have been supplemented by many recruited from across English lands.<sup>96</sup> The recruitment of workers from throughout England would have both exposed the English peoples to the newly conquered regions of Wales and accustom the Welsh to a wide variety of Englishmen. These early workers would be the bulk of the Englishmen that the Welsh would encounter during the early period of the colonization of Wales, before the true colonists began moving into the towns constructed alongside these castles.

### Conclusion

These numbers help indicate the massive amounts of workmen required throughout the castles Edward had constructed to secure Wales. These castles required thousands of laborers throughout the building process, and they accounted for the largest part of costs spent in building the castles. As has been discussed in the last chapter the wages for these thousands of workers

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<sup>94</sup> Taylor, "The King's Works in Wales 1277-1330," in *The History of the Kings Works: Volume I*, 357-365.

<sup>95</sup> Taylor, "The King's Works in Wales 1277-1330," in *The History of the Kings Works: Volume I*, 369-383.

<sup>96</sup> Taylor, *The Welsh castles of Edward I*, 91, 103-106.



were the primary cost of constructing these castles. From the managers of the castle construction the likes of which Master James of St. George was chief, and Richard the Engineer aided in that they were responsible for coordinating these workers as they pushed toward the construction of Edward's castles in Wales. Without these laborers and the men who managed them it would not have been possible for Edward to have built six wholly new castles and repair and replace the many others that were necessary to maintain the hold on this newest piece of his realm. These workers, and the massive amount of movement from England into Wales provided the early colonists that were paving the way for the more permanent colonies that would inevitably follow them in the castles that they were building with the attached towns. This system of colonization would have prepared the way for the permanent arrivals from the English, as a large group of them had been living there while they constructed the castles and town walls.

## CHAPTER 3

### THE SOCIAL IMPACTS OF EDWARDIAN CONSTRUCTION

The last two chapters have explored the building costs in material and labor components and the locales and numbers of workers used on the construction of the castles of Conwy and Caernarvon. This section goes beyond the construction of the castles and look at the effect they had on Welsh society. To do this requires an examination of Edward's Statute of Wales (1284), the royal offices at Conwy and Caernarvon, and the siting of Conwy and Caernarvon. The examination of these elements of Edward's castles in Wales provide a better understanding of the social impacts of Edward's conquests, and how these impacted the colonization of Wales by the English. To begin, a deeper look into Edward's Statute of Wales (1284) and how it changed the relationship between Wales and England is necessary. This discussion also lays the basis for the interaction between colonists settling in the new towns and the Welsh.

#### The Statute of Wales (1284)

As Edward prepared for his newest war with Wales, he proposed a new solution to the problems he faced in the region. Edward's plan to put an end to the internecine conflicts between the Welsh princes and the English crown required total conquest of the lands of Llywelyn ap Gruffydd. He knew that the burden on the realm would be greater in his newest endeavor to secure his rule, but he believed it was necessary to remove the Welsh Principality of Gwynedd from power replace them with his own dynasty.<sup>97</sup> The war began in 1282 and was over by 1284 with King Edward already constructing new castles at Conwy, Caernarvon and Harlech. It took almost a year from the capture of David ap Gruffydd for Edward to announce his plans for ruling

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<sup>97</sup> Rowlands, in *Edward I and Wales*, 56.

northern Wales. Edward spent this year devising this statute to ensure the best combination of Welsh and English law. He did this by creating a commission of trusted functionaries who went out into the Welsh countryside and investigated the powers that his predecessors held and those held by the Welsh princes. He required all his royal officials in Welsh counties throughout the region, both newly conquered and longstanding, to bring together anyone who had knowledge of the powers held by the King. Once Edward's officials had gathered these witnesses, he sent his commission to the courts held and had them question these people. The information that Edward gained from this process of questioning informed him on how he was going to govern the Welsh people.<sup>98</sup> With this knowledge the king released the Statute of Wales in 1284 which performed two functions. It transferred the lands previously held by the Welsh Princes into royal hands and it changed how the rule of law worked in Wales.<sup>99</sup>

The changes Edward makes are not just in who is the ruler of the lands but to the laws of the land as well. The statute states that the newly created office of Justiciar of Snowdon will govern the three newly created shires in northern Wales, and he would do so at the behest of the king and under English law.<sup>100</sup> This is the biggest change facing the newly conquered lands of Wales, English criminal law is being forced upon the Welsh. Another major change to criminal law was the addition of the sheriff, bailiff and coroner. The sheriff was appointed by Edward's Justiciar and the bailiff and coroner were elected positions to be chosen by their communities but governed by the sheriff. This change required the Welsh to submit to the English sheriff and coroner when they made inquiries into criminal actions. Twice a year after the Feast of Saint Michael and Easter the Justiciar would visit each Commote, an area like a county, and hold court

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<sup>98</sup> Bowen, xxix-xxx.

<sup>99</sup> Bowen, 2-4.

<sup>100</sup> Bowen, 3.

adjudicating the murders and other bodily crimes committed during the last half year.<sup>101</sup> This was a drastic change to the Welsh, who were used to handling their own affairs in a by town basis. Edward was now standardizing the law and by placing the appointed Sheriff in charge of criminal matters taking control of criminal law. This essentially standardized the rule of law across royally held lands in England and Wales. Edward wrote the statute as if it covered all the territories of Wales, but the changes were only felt by those people who lived in royal lands and left baronial lands to their own devices.<sup>102</sup>

It is interesting to note that Edward did not make changes to most points of property law or inheritance. He made three changes that affected the property of individuals. The statute introduced an English style dowry system.<sup>103</sup> It removed the ability of children born out of wedlock to inherit property and it made it possible for women to inherit property even though it went against Welsh custom.<sup>104</sup> Except for these limited changes Edward left Welsh property law alone. This is most likely the case because of the information Edward gathered from his commission, which must have shown him that there was no precedence in the region for the king having jurisdiction over these matters.

Edward I released his Statute of Wales (1284) and announced that the independence of the last Welsh kingdom was gone. Replacing this kingdom was English rule, and that the people of Wales that once operated on almost entirely local level were now facing uniting force. Edward was now the lord of these lands, and they were going to act like English lands. The Welsh could keep their laws when they dealt entirely with local property matters, but in the case of criminal

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<sup>101</sup> Bowen, 4-5.

<sup>102</sup> Llinos Beverly Smith, "The Governance of Edwardian Wales," in *Edward I and Wales*, ed. Gareth Elwyn Jones Tervor Herbert (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1993), 75.

<sup>103</sup> Bowen, 13, 24-25.

<sup>104</sup> Bowen, 25-26.

law and non-local matters left their control. Also, the properties that now fell under the kings supervision were going to face a unified taxation system, that would place them at odds with the king, demonstrated by the Welsh rebellion of 1294.<sup>105</sup> The relationship between the Welsh commoners and their rulers had now become much different than what they were used to.

The Statute of Wales does not include Conwy castle by name, but it was a seat of governance for its local region, as it would be where Edward stationed his appointed officials, and it would be the center of its region. Caernarvon, on the other hand, is named directly in the Statutes of Wales as it is here that Edward placed the Justiciar of Wales, his highest official in the newly created provinces. This goes some way to adding to the explanation for why Caernarvon is such a uniquely designed castle compared to the others that he had built.

The Statute of Wales (1284) is the ultimate expression of the colonial side of Edward's actions. By standardizing criminal law Edward ensured that the English colonists who would shortly be moving into the new towns that Edward was having built alongside his new castles. With the implementations of these new laws Edward ensures that the colonists are protected but leaves property law alone and some Welsh legal traditions in place to reduce the friction between the English and the Welsh. The relationship between the Welsh commoners and the English crown is one of the clearest examples of how the colonization of northern Wales ties into the wider colonial narrative of England. Since the Welsh provinces that Edward conquered were considered royal lands they were excluded from the fledgling parliament and had no recourse for their complaints when faced with high taxes to pay for Edward's actions in Gascony. Added to this, and to the colonial narrative, is that Edward was levying Welsh soldiers to fight in his

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<sup>105</sup> John E. Morris, *The Welsh Wars of Edward I: A Contribution to Medieval Military History Based on Original Documents*, Combined Books ed. (Conshohocken, PA: Combined Books, 1996).

other conflicts. This too has a direct parallel to later colonial practices by the English.

### Royal Offices at Conwy and Caernarvon

While Conwy and Caernarvon were massive edifices of military power in Wales, that was not the only function they would serve. These castles were the seats of governance for their regions. Caernarvon was the seat of English control of northern Wales and Conwy was the seat of governance of its small region, beneath the banner of Caernarvon. In both cases the castles were staffed by royally appointed constables who oversaw selecting and keeping other staff to maintain the castles. The constables themselves were the upper ranks of the members of the English civil service. Some might have been born to nobility, but others came from more humble origins. The castle staff would typically include as permanent staff some number of gatekeepers, watchmen and chaplains that varied based on the size of the castle and its requirements. These various other personnel would be recruited by the constable, and their choice would depend on the constable on who was chosen, however records on their identity and where they're from is unavailable. While constables controlled the castles, they were not the only royal official there.<sup>106</sup>

The sheriff is the other official that typically would have residence at a castle. Where the constable oversaw the castle, the sheriff controlled the lands around the castle in the name of the king and was a royally appointed office. In most cases the sheriff was a trusted local but, in some cases, it was awarded to trusted servants of the king who were sent to these locales. The sheriff collected the king's revenue, managed the estates, enforced the law and generally maintained the realm for the king. Essentially, the sheriff was the head of the region that the king appointed him

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<sup>106</sup> Norman John Greville Pounds, *The Medieval Castle in England and Wales: a Social and Political History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 87-90.

to.<sup>107</sup> The coroners and bailiffs that served under the sheriff in Wales aided him in his function as law giver and investigated the violent crimes in their communities. The coroner was an elected position, and a member of the community of which he served, who would investigate crimes committed in the region. The bailiff was the servant of the courts and enforced any orders that the court gave. He ensured that people made the payments required of them, returned property or did whatever else the court ordered them to do. Here are the connections between the castles and the Statute of Wales (1284). The castle was the unit by which the king applied these statutes to the countryside. Edward did this by combining Welsh counties under the aegis of castles where the royally appointed sheriffs would work with the locally elected coroners and bailiffs to enforce the laws of England and Wales, creating a standardized system of governance for the region.

The Justiciar of North Wales was the chief applicator of the Statute of Wales (1284). This pronouncement charged him with the creation of the courts of the Exchequer and the Chancery, and with touring the lands under his control. The Exchequer was responsible for the collection of taxes from the sheriff and the Chancery maintained the status quo in English and Welsh common law, ensuring that it remained just. The Justiciar was the one who must travel throughout his region twice a year to judge the most heinous of crimes, and to hear any other that the sheriffs could not cover.<sup>108</sup>

The new system of royal officers adds to the idea that the conquest of Wales is more a colonization than a change of governance. The implementation of the hybrid system of some offices being appointed and some offices being elected helps make the conquest and colonization

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<sup>107</sup> Pounds, 91-96.

<sup>108</sup> Bowen, 3-4.

of the Welsh province more palatable for those already living there. The colonization process also gives a large measure of royal control over the minutiae of running the province by making it a dual effort system but leaving most of the power in the hands of officials whose continued service depends on their loyalty to the English crown.

### The Social Implications of the Siting of Conwy and Caernarvon Castle with an Examination of the Architectural Style of Caernarvon Castle

Edward I sited both Conwy and Caernarvon castle on important Welsh locations. The deliberate choice of these locations mirrored Edward's replacement of Welsh law with English Law. The construction of Caernarvon was obviously unique in both the style of its towers and the coloration of its walls, the historical debate over these choices is changing. It was long held that these two features were meant to mimic those of Constantinople, and thus create the illusion of historic ties to the Roman Empire, but new arguments posit a more local inspiration.<sup>109</sup> Conwy castle on the other hand has a much easier explanation for why Edward chose the site he did. First this section examines Conwy castles site and its importance to the Welsh and why Edward chose the site, then the examination of Caernarvon for the same reasons. The discussion on Caernarvon also includes the discussion on the builder's deliberate style choices in its construction. These discussions lead into a pair of ideas, that Edward is using these castles as psychological and social weapons beyond their obvious military applications. Both siting choices also feed into the idea of English colonialism, as these new colonies are both strategically important to the defense of the newly conquered territories, and symbolically significant. To

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<sup>109</sup> Wheatley, in *The impact of the Edwardian castles in Wales: the proceedings of a conference held at Bangor University, 7-9 September 2007*, 129-130.



replace the Welsh symbols with English ones during the colonization phase helps further expand English influence.

The siting of Conwy begins long before the war of 1282, with the destruction of the English castle of Deganwy by Llywelyn ap Gruffydd in 1262 revealing the poor positioning of the castle. Deganwy was not on an easily accessible waterway and therefore had no ability to supply itself during a protracted siege, so his choice to select a site better suited to his needs is understandable.<sup>110</sup> Instead Edward chose the equally defensible site of the rock at Aberconwy that was currently occupied by an abbey and some residences. The Cistercian abbey of St. Mary was the “premier royal foundation of the northern princes.”<sup>111</sup> This abbey also housed the remains of the royal family including Llywelyn ab Iorwerth and his descendants. The other buildings on this site was the “Hall of Llywelyn” the residency of the Welsh princes. While it may have cost of relocating the abbey is substantial the significance of it is obvious. Edward’s movement of a prominent royal Welsh royal institution and the remains of the Welsh leaders from their position shows Edward as being a powerful figure. The construction of his castle on the location that the Welsh princes occupied, tearing down their structures and replacing them with his own shows Edward eclipsing the native rulers and becoming their natural replacement. To further this natural replacement Edward ensured that expansive residencies were included in the castle’s construction. Edward used this residence in his visit to Wales during the Welsh Rebellion of 1294. The newly subjugated Welsh would not miss the symbolic implications of Edward’s structures rising on the remains of princes of Gwynedd’s residencies.<sup>112</sup> Another choice to symbolize his power and control over the region, with the castle walls being washed

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<sup>110</sup> Pounds, 172-173.

<sup>111</sup> Taylor, “The King’s Works in Wales 1277-1330,” in *The History of the Kings Works: Volume I*, 337.

<sup>112</sup> Taylor, *The Welsh castles of Edward I*, 45.

with lime to make them a brilliant white that would have the castle that already jutted out from a high rock be visible for miles as it gleamed in the sun.<sup>113</sup> This also makes Conwy an excellent example of the English colonization process in Wales, as the castles location and the creation of its town walls fortified the colony on an important site for the Welsh, and replacing it with one important for the new English rulers.

Where the choices at Conwy are rather obvious, it has a good position that happened to demonstrate Edward's dominance of Wales, Caernarvon has similar obvious choices for its location, but debate remains on certain design choices. Caernarvon before Edward I was a historically important center of Wales. Caernarvon is the site of the important Roman fort of Segontium. This fort built over a thousand years before Edward arrived at the region has its own detailed history that ties into the legend of this place. The site has several legends that Edward I knew of on selection of the site. The mythical narrative that surrounds Caernarvon castles stems from a Welsh legend within the *Breuddwyd Maxen*. This Welsh legendary text contains many of the legends that surround Caernarvon. One myth held that the importance of the town was that here Peblig, reputed son of the Emperor Magnus Maximus, founded the mother church of the town Llanbeblig.<sup>114</sup> Another myth called *Mabinogion* that ties the town to a Roman imperial past is the story of Emperor Maximus, appearing as Maxen Wledig, travelled from Rome following a dream of a land of mountains and a great castle, finding it where Caernarvon is and settling there until he was recalled to Rome.<sup>115</sup> Another Welsh legend about the Romans that is tied in by Edward into the construction of Caernarvon, Roman and Christian history is the supposed discovery of the body of a Roman official who was the father of the Roman Emperor

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<sup>113</sup> Coldstream, *The Decorated Style: Architecture and Ornament, 1240-1360*.

<sup>114</sup> Taylor, *Caernarvon Castle and Town Walls, Gwynedd = Castell Caernarfon a muriau'r dref, Gwynedd*, 3-4.

<sup>115</sup> Wheatley, 112-113.

Constantine.<sup>116</sup> Welsh legend has more connections to Constantine, as they believed that he was the father of the legendary King Arthur. Edward around this same time had received Arthur's crown that had been taken from Llywelyn. This act, especially considering Edward's reburial of Arthur five years before show Edward's desire to connect himself to Welsh legends.<sup>117</sup> While Edward kept in mind these mythological reasons for building the castle it is also being constructed on the site of the original Norman motte-and-bailey castle. This connection provides a more immediate connection for Edward's conquest of north Wales as it became a war of reconquest, not conquest.<sup>118</sup> These legends all tie together the importance that Edward placed on this castle when he made it the greatest of his works in Wales. The construction of Edward's castle here was clearly a symbolic one, whether Edward was trying to use Arthurian Tradition, Roman Tradition, or follow in the footsteps of Constantine cannot be known, but the castle itself would have fit within the tradition of this castle's construction. Caernarvon would even have a carving of the king's face placed over the main gate to further extend his dominance of the area.<sup>119</sup> Beyond that, Edward had statuary in the shape of eagles placed atop one of his towers to further connect himself to an Imperial Roman past.<sup>120</sup> Another action by Edward I at Caernarvon provides another view into his thoughts on the castle and its location. Queen Eleanor was pregnant and approaching term while she and Edward were travelling through Wales, he made a concerted push to be at Caernarvon castle for when the child, who was to become Edward Prince of Wales and eventually Edward II, was born. This provides some idea to Edward's views on

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<sup>116</sup> Wheatley, in *The impact of the Edwardian castles in Wales: the proceedings of a conference held at Bangor University, 7-9 September 2007*, 127-134.

<sup>117</sup> Morris, 191-193.

<sup>118</sup> Taylor, "The King's Works in Wales 1277-1330," in *The History of the Kings Works: Volume I*, 369-370.

<sup>119</sup> Coldstream, *Medieval Architecture*, 167-169.

<sup>120</sup> Wheatley, 114.

family and the importance thereof, using both his wife and child for a political statement.<sup>121</sup>

The construction of the castle itself brings its many supposed legacies into focus. The castle is unique among English castles because of two distinct features, banded color walls and polygonal towers to mimic the polygonal towers used by the Romans or those built at Constantinople. These two features are a striking departure from the other castles of the English conquest of Wales. There are several explanations for this design choice, the most recent of which made by Abigail Wheatley describes these features as hailing from Roman structures that still had ruins dotting the countryside.<sup>122</sup> Another explanation is offered by Arnold Taylor, and that is these features were designed to emulate the Theodosian Walls of Constantinople, as that city is tied to Caernarvon through the legends associated with the town. Nicola Coldstream provides a third interpretation to the castle's design. She argues that these towers are examples of the burgeoning decorated style of architecture growing in this era. The polygon instead of the rounded base had become a new favorite by architects. She continues to describe that the banding of the walls and the statuary placed on the Eagle Tower were features of this new style of architecture making the beauty of the castle an important element to its control.<sup>123</sup> The placement was not all symbolism however, as the location is on the important crossroads from a major production center on the nearby island.

What is apparent at Conwy and Caernarvon is a type of social and psychological warfare in place. Edward is no stranger to this symbolic conquest, as he makes use of it as well in his conflicts with Scotland. In Wales he is clearly using the symbolism of the castles that he

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<sup>121</sup> Prestwich, 226.

<sup>122</sup> Wheatley, in *The impact of the Edwardian castles in Wales: the proceedings of a conference held at Bangor University, 7-9 September 2007*.

<sup>123</sup> Coldstream, *The Decorated Style: Architecture and Ornament, 1240-1360*, 39, 45.

constructed to show the dominance of his rule over the regions he had just conquered. The siting of these castles also provides another example of the colonial effects of Edward's actions. By replacing the previous ruler's architecture with his own Edward announces that the English were now the dominant people in the land, and have superseded the control of the Welsh.

Another important note to the construction of the castles Conwy and Caernarvon is that the Welsh were barred from settling in the new towns that were being built alongside the castles. The towns in this period then would have been bastions of the English who were moving into Wales. These towns become the colonies that the castles enabled, and that Edward protected with his social programs.<sup>124</sup>

### Conclusion

The works by Edward I in his conquest of Wales go beyond the construction of the castles and the costs associated with them. This chapter has shown that the effects of Edward's political actions tie directly into the construction works he put into place. The construction of the massive edifices at Conwy and Caernarvon display the power of the king and reinforces his Statute of Wales (1284). The use of these castles as the base for royal officials provides the credence and power that these officials required to perform their functions in the communities that they controlled. And finally, the use of psychological and social tactics with the construction of these two castles and their connections to Welsh history ties together these other elements, as these shows of power would be meaningless without the others to make use of it. The social changes implemented by Edward in his Statute of Wales and the placement of the castles Conwy and Caernarvon all fit within the idea that the conquest of Wales quickly becomes the

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<sup>124</sup> Griffiths.

colonization of Wales. The merging of law, the replacement of Welsh sites of power, and the hybridizing of government officials all lend themselves to the idea that what the English accomplish in Wales is not just a conquest, but a colonization of the region. The social impacts of the building of these castles as the prelude to colonization would not have been possible without the movement of people and resources into the region and forcing the English and Welsh into interaction as the massive number of temporary workers settled for years at their worksites.

## CONCLUSION: LEGACIES

Over the course of this study I have examined how the conquest of Wales turned into a colonization of the northern Provinces. The conquest completed in 1284 with the release of the Statute of Wales (1284) changed the relationship between Edward I and the last independent region of Wales and paved the way for its colonization by the English to stabilize the region. The king knew that his conquest of Wales would require more manpower and more resources than he had used in the past. That Edward changed his tactic in 1282 in the light of the constant war between himself and Llywelyn ap Gruffydd is not surprising. This alteration in goals resulted in the death of the last Welsh princes and the conquest and colonization of the last independent Welsh Kingdom in Gwynedd.<sup>125</sup> Edward's desires in this war would require increased material, monetary, and personal resources to complete the social changes necessary to secure the conquests he had most recently made, and would amount to a concerted effort to colonize this newly conquered region.

They were military and social bastions for the governance of the region and these castles both stood on grounds that were important to the Welsh that Edward was able to co-opt. These castles would also become the first colonies that would be brought from England into Wales, as they were fortified against Welsh uprisings. Both castles served as homes for Edward I for significant periods of time. The examination has given us several conclusions to draw from. First, the king applied the resources used for these castles and their construction in both a military and symbolic nature. Edward's ability to move thousands of people and hundreds of tons of resources to construct his castles in a rapid manor demonstrated to the people of Wales

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<sup>125</sup> Longley, in *The impact of the Edwardian castles in Wales: the proceedings of a conference held at Bangor University, 7-9 September 2007*, 16-21.

that the king was no longer going to give them the independence that they had held in the past by integrating the Welsh into the English legal system. The effect of these systems was to prepare for the colonization of northern Wales and provide for the Englishmen that would soon be making Wales their permanent residence, and the choices of location show the understanding that the colonies were going to be a permanent installment to the Welsh countryside.

The first chapter examined the costs and locations of the materials used, and the costs of employing the labor force on these castles. The application of these resources were the opening acts in paving the way for the eventual colonization by the English, as having prepared defensible positions for them to live in would incentivize colonists to move to the newly built cities. Also, that the resource allocation appears like later colonial efforts, as when possible the builders would make use of local goods, but they clearly had many goods that they needed to import from the more industrialized core. These all provide a distinct colonial overlay to the conquest of Wales and the subsequent construction projects begun within its bounds.

The second chapter covered the people who worked on the castles Conwy and Caernarvon. This chapter provides the other half to the early colonial phase of Edward's conquest of Wales. In the last chapter the resource application mirrored the resource application of an imperial power to one of its colonies, the movement of peoples does as well. The early movement of builders into Wales set the stage for later colonization, as these builders would typically spend years at the job site. It is likely that when it was impossible to work, they may have returned home, but that is unknown, most of the year the builders would be living at the site of their construction, and would have either consumed local resources, or had resources brought in for them. Either way, the sheer numbers of people being housed while working at these jobsites would have forced the surrounding Welsh to acclimate to their new neighbors and paved



the way for when the permanent colonists did arrive.

The third and final chapter examined the social implications of Edward's conquest of Wales and argues that these social implications provide the final aspects of the colonization. The argument here is that the actions and choices that Edward makes are instrumental in paving the way for the colonization of Wales. The standardization of Welsh and English criminal law would ensure that the English are well protected. The siting of the castles at important points, both defensively and culturally ensured that the towns demonstrated their might as important bastions of English power, a boon for colonists in hostile territory. Finally, the hybridization of appointed and elected positions makes the colonies more palatable to the colonized.

The construction of the castles Conwy and Caernarvon in Wales required a massive number of resources of the material, monetary and personnel varieties and that the application of these resources by King Edward I happened with more forethought than just the physical protection of the realm that he conquered, but to secure the realm against future rebellions. The projection of English might through these colonies and associated policies would provide a near at hand resource when dealing with rebellion as well. When the inevitable rebellion did happen, as they did in 1287 and 1294, Edward's forces quickly quashed them which demonstrated the military applications, but the social applications worked outside of that and possibly reduced the severity of these rebellions in Wales. This study shows that Edward's castle building programs in Wales at Conwy and Caernarvon goes beyond just his desire to defend the territories he was conquering and securing them by integrating them into the wider English system. The use of all these systems to construct colonies in Wales makes it possible for Edward to secure a more lasting peace that would avoid more destructive wars with Wales and that they would never be as severe as the ones he had faced in the conflicts of 1256, 1262 and 1277 or 1282. This study takes

the understanding of these castles and Edward's actions in 1282 further than previous studies. By seeing the creation of these castles through the lens of a colonial endeavor it will help explain later English colonial endeavors and some of the paths that they take.

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