

Text of Scheduled Ancient Monument Sign for Holt Castle (After having this camera shot enlarged, it was with real difficulty that I copied this text with the use of a magnifying reading glass. CHA)

History

Holt Castle was built in the late 13th Century following the successful conquest of North Wales by Edward I. He rewarded his commanders with large areas of land previously held by Welsh Lords and Princes. Earl Warenne was given the Lordship of Bloomfield and Yale land which stretched from the River Dee around Holt and Overton through Wrexham, beyond Llanarmen yn Jal (A Welsh name). No other suitable existing site to use, Warenne eventually decided to build a Castle near the border with England and sometime before 1311 Holt Castle was completed. It was during the Civil War that Holt Castle gained importance. North Wales was fiercely Royalist whilst Cheshire was loyal to Parliament. The Castle was besieged in 1648. In 1646-7 it held out for a whole year before falling to the Parliamentarians, the last Royalist castle in North East Wales to fall a year after Chester Castle.

The Castle Design

Holt Castle was of unusual design being a regular pentagon with five large round corner towers. The nearest parallels for this form are to be found on the continent. There was a separate water gate and various associated out buildings. While there are some obvious differences and discrepancies, surveys and plans of the site made during the 16th and early 17th centuries, show the original impressive nature of the Castle.

The Castle Today

The Castle was built around a rock of Triassic sandstone 1,245 million years ago which still survives today. This block formed the inner courtyard with the outer walls and towers built from ground level. This resulted in the inner courtyard being at second floor level. An entrance doorway is still visible. The scant remains of walls, seen today, are of the inner courtyard wall. Robbing of the site to build Eaton Hall, and later destruction has left little of the castle once referred to as Castle Lyons.

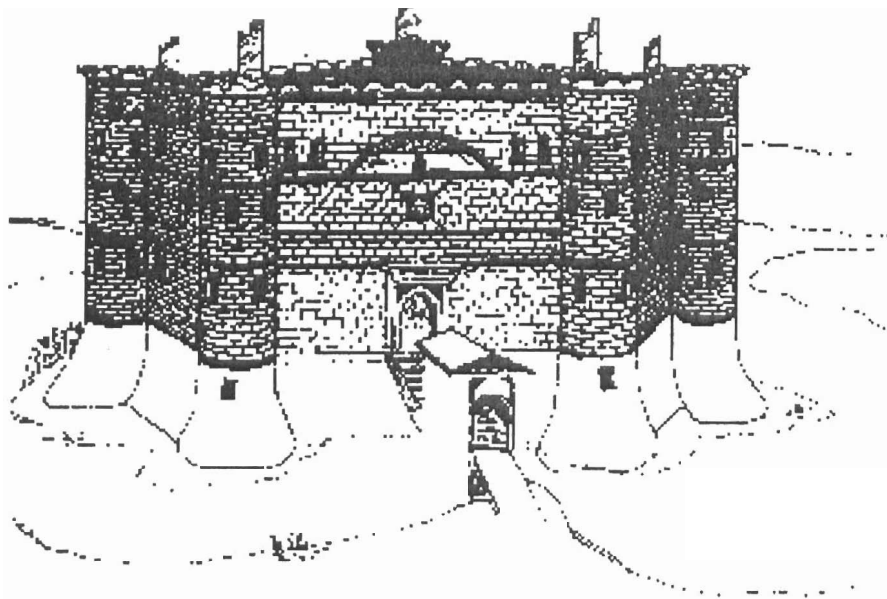
Geology

Holt Castle Quarry has two sedimentary rock types - red sandstone and mudstone which has thinner layers. These are 243 million years old. At this time Holt was situated in a similar position to the present day Sahara, 25 degrees north of the equator. All around you can see curved layers of rock. These represent the preserved fronts of sand dunes forming in a large wide river flowing over a desert landscape. The red sandstone has small rounded grains of sand coated with iron oxide.

Under the archway there are broken up rocks which represent a fault. This is part of the Holt-Coddington tear fault which has moved the red rocks sideways, 2 ½ miles to the east. This red sandstone is easily quarried and has been used to build Holt Castle, Holt Bridge, St. Chad's and many other building and walls in Holt.

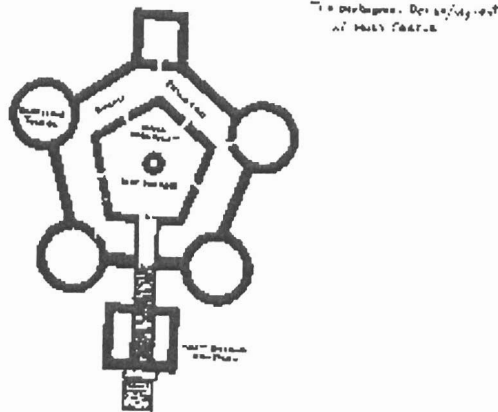
Holt Castle

“Reproduction of how the Castle must have looked in the 14th Century. Copyright...???” (I had the original camera picture I took of the sign blown up with copier and was then able to read all informational text, but very small print is too blurred to make out the entire line of caption. - CHA)



Caption below official Surveyor's Sketch of basic design of Holt Castle

From Norden's Survey 1620
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All that is left of the inner walls is a portion at the right rear of the pentagon. Of the outer walls and rooms and rounded towers nothing remains. Even the ground this stood on is scraped clean, just level grassy land. The entrance door opening in the photograph on page No. 35 led into the open inner court, which was the 2nd level. CHA

in "On the Trail Segment"