

## **Motte and Bailey Castle Show Notes Season 1, Episode 4**

Hello, and welcome to episode four of the first season of the Time Pieces History Podcast. I'm your host, Gudrun Lauret, and this season we're looking at objects and people that shaped Britain. Today's object, though, is actually more European in flavour than you might realise.

Motte and Bailey castles are a feature across the country, but what exactly are they, and why would anyone build a fortress like that? Well, the motte part is the mound, from the Old French 'mote', which became the word we use now.

The making of the hump requires earth to be dug out of the ground, creating a ditch or 'moat' which makes things about confusing, especially as they weren't always filled with water.

The bailey part is the outer enclosure, which acted as a defence for whatever structure was atop the motte. These could also have ditches round them, and at the very least they would be fenced all the way round.

Motte and bailey structures were built in the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries, and in the beginning they would have had a smallish wooden tower as the focus. Over time, and when bigger mottes were created, larger castles of stone could be built. They were designed to house the lord and lady of the area, their family and household servants.

The bailey would be home to more servants, the stables and all manner of other buildings, including a chapel, warehouses and barracks. Those within the bailey would act as lookouts to protect the family in the castle and the wider community in case of invasion.

The motte and bailey design was used widely throughout Ireland, Britain and Europe, and was particularly favoured by the Normans, who found them ideal defensive structures during the time of the Conquest.

They were cheap and quick to put up, so they could be constructed while marching across the country, and could be manned by a member of the nobility who had taken William's side. A castle at Hampstead Marshall took eighty days to build, with 50 men working on it.

If the Normans were able to construct them as they marched across Britain, they would have needed 10 times as many men to help. Mottes were created with layers of soil and stone, so not an easy undertaking. It's possible that residents of the towns they went through were called upon to shift the earth.

As it turns out, though, the French had been building the motte and bailey castles long before they needed them as a way of controlling conquered lands. From around 845, the country had been under attack from Scandinavian Vikings, who were unrelenting in their assaults.

The solution was to build 'castellans' – fortified structures to enclose livestock and humans and keep them safe. The Norsemen eventually returned home, although some stayed in France and became Normans. They took the castellan design and turned them into the motte and bailey later used by William the Conqueror.

If you find yourself in the north east of England, you can visit Warkworth Castle and see the remains of a once-glorious motte and bailey, situated on a prime lookout spot. I have fond memories of Warkworth, visiting often as a child, as well as studying it for GCSE.

The site was probably settled some time before the Norman Conquest, although a stone construction was built in 1129. Henry II repossessed Northumberland in 1157, and the castle may have been built as part of that takeover.

The king gave the castle to Roger fitz Eustace, and his son Robert built the castle we see today, between 1199 and 1214. By the end of the century, Warkworth was a key location in the battle between Scotland and England, and indeed it was besieged in 1327.

In 1332, Edward III gave the castle to Henry Percy, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Lord Percy. They were Earls of Northumberland, powerful, often in favour with the king or queen, and owned much of the land in the area. Alnwick Castle was their ancestral seat, but they chose to live at Warkworth until the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

The Percys are probably worthy of a podcast in their own right, with a host of colourful family members populating the history books of Britain. There are tales of bravery in battle and loyalty to the throne – when it suited them.

That's it for today – we might revisit the Percys at a later date. Let me know if you've been to Warkworth, or if there's a good example of a motte and bailey castle I should check out.

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