



Fig. 1. Carisbrooke shell-keep, c. 1130-40 with added gatehouse and portcullis c. 1335.

## Carisbrooke

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The castle's founder, William fitzOsbern, built an enclosure castle soon after the Norman Conquest. The motte and bailey was the work of Richard de Redvers, a supporter of King Henry I who was rewarded in 1100 with the Isle of Wight and lands in Devon based on Plympton. Richard died in 1107. By the time his son, Baldwin, held the castle against King Stephen in 1136 it was clearly very defensible and had substantial masonry structures. Restored to the de Redvers in 1154, the site was held by the family until 1293: its last lord, from 1260 onwards, was Countess Isabella, who sold it to King Edward I just prior to her death. She undertook a major rebuilding of many parts of the castle. Held subsequently by the Crown for most of its history, its vulnerable location led to building works during the Hundred Years' War, especially in the 1330s and 1370s. Massive outworks with bastions, designed for the age of gunpowder artillery, were added in the 1590s.

The shell-keep on the motte is assumed to be part of the castle defended in 1136 against King Stephen. Whether it succeeded a timber structure or was the primary motte building is not known. The shell-keep continued to be an important part of the site's facilities for a long time: its gatehouse tower, with vaulted entrance tunnel and portcullis grooves, was added in around 1335. This entrance, and whatever earlier entrance it succeeded, was reached from a long stair protected by a wing-wall rising from the 12th-century bailey curtain wall on the north side. A corresponding wing-wall rose on the east side, but no longer survives. The crenellated wall-tops of the shell-keep have long

since disappeared, but the wall-walk survives and the structure remains impressive. The outer wall, an irregular, twelve-sided polygon in shape, is largely of 12th-century date except on the south and east where there is 13th- and 14th-century work. The interior, however, now reveals little of the medieval domestic plan. The well, perhaps the one said to have run dry in 1136, still survives. Two garderobes, one (raised) near the entrance, the other (ground level) at the far end, suggest lean-two structures and the straight south wall probably carried the main range. "In 1897 a removal of the debris revealed the walls of a 13th-century building with a fireplace and remains of rooms against the south wall" (VCH 1912, 227). The walls which now dominate the interior, creating separate rooms including the well-house, are largely post-medieval.

The absence of the motte and its buildings, from the survey made in 1293 for King Edward, may mean these had been neglected under Countess Isabella. But expenditure on the castle from 1294-98 (during the war with France) referred, amongst other matters, to oak for the "allures and battlements about the great tower". The well in the *dungeon* was cleaned out in 1378, and there was expenditure from 1378-80 on the gate and portcullis of the *dungeon*.

*Internal Diameter:* 60ft x 50ft (18.3m x 15.25m).

*Shell wall height:* 20ft (6m) to wall-walk (exterior).

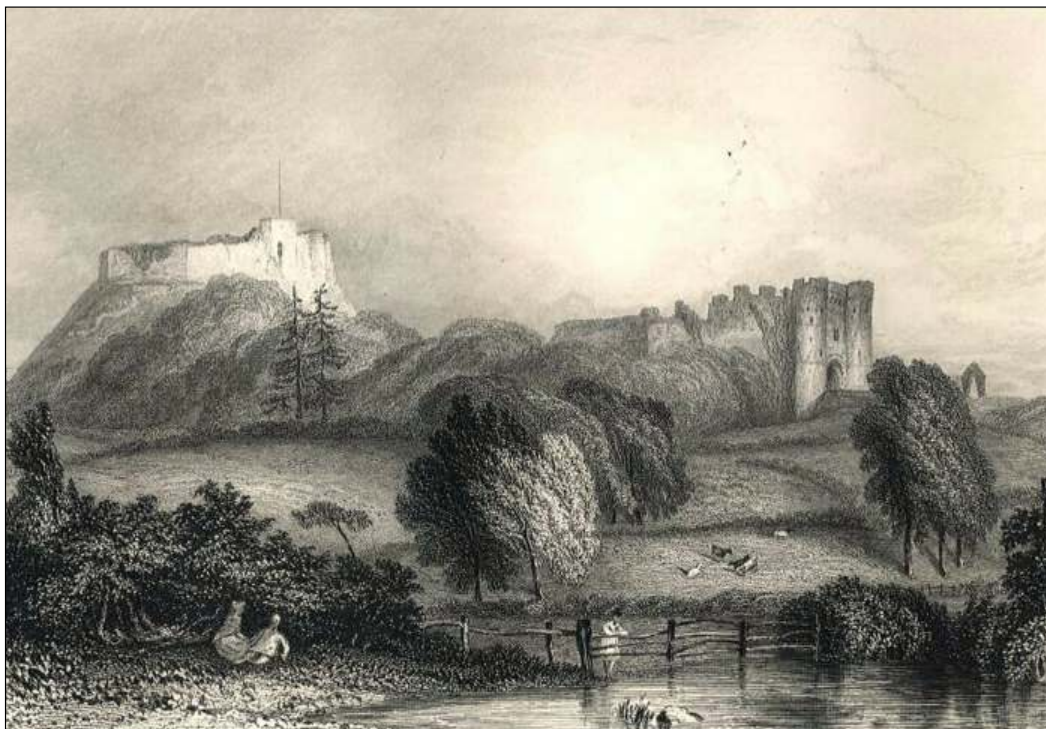
*Motte height:* 60ft. (18.3m)

*Published refs:* VCH 1912, 224-227; Brown *et alii* 1963, II, 591-595; Renn 1968, 131-132; King 1983, I, 190; Young 2000; Young 2003.

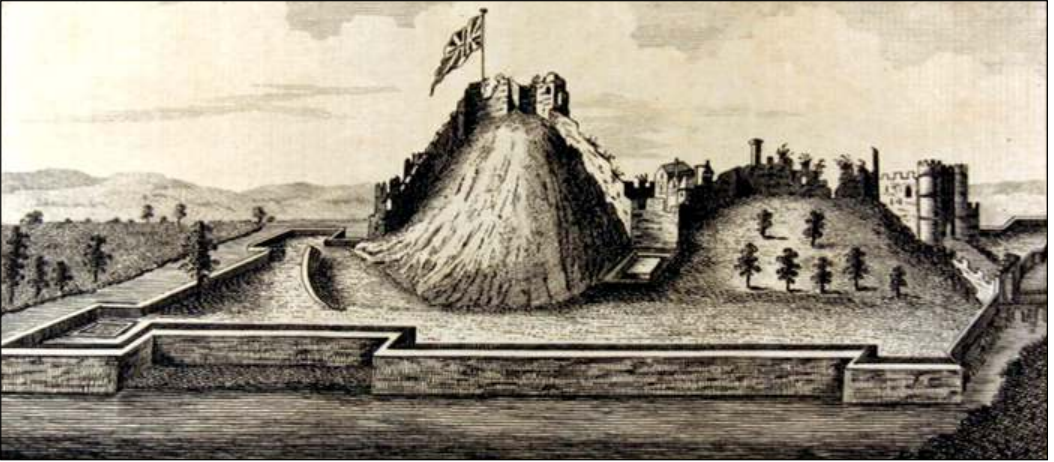


ABOVE: Fig. 2. After Luke Clennell (1781–1840) 'Carisbrooke Castle from the Calbourn Road' From 'Picturesque Views on the Southern Coast of England', 1814.

BELOW: Fig. 3. F. G. Sargent, engraved by E. Radclyffe. From W Beattie, Castles & Abbeys of England (1842-44)

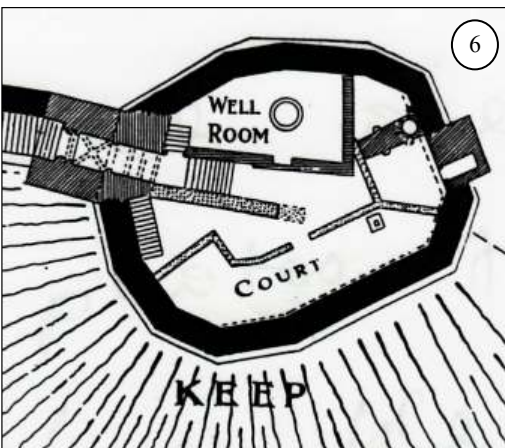
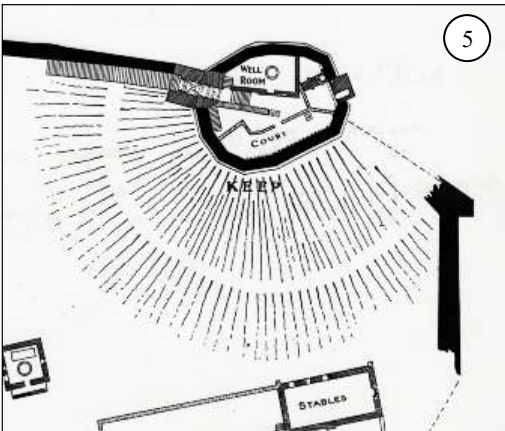






ABOVE: Fig. 4. A print from 'England Displayed 1769 (based on S & N Buck's view of 1733).

BELOW: Left. Figs. 5 & 6. Plan and enlarged plan detail of Carisbrooke shell-keep from VCH 1912, Vol. 5 opp. p. 226. Quadripartite rib-vaulted section c. 1335. Transverse ribs c. 1280s. Right: Fig. 7. Sepia print c. 1900 of the 71 stairs to the keep gatehouse. Compare the arch with the erosion in fig 9.







ABOVE: Figs. 8, 9. 71 steps up to the gatehouse. The arch shown right (picture taken in 2005), has since been repaired with two new blocks inserted (2010) (see fig. 8 & cf fig. 7). There was one portcullis in the gatehouse, but two in the outer entrance.

BELOW: Figs. 10, 11. Ribbed vaulting in the outer gatehouse bay. Transverse vaulting in the inner bay. See fig. 6.







*Figs. 12-15. The interior of the shell-keep. 12: Garderobe (inserted?) on the east wall (no dogleg). 13: Garderobe on the north wall (also seen in 14). 14: Looking west along the curious high-walled corridor to the entrance gatehouse. Probably a post-medieval 16<sup>th</sup>-century addition. 15: One of two arrow loops on the top of the gatehouse.*







*ABOVE: Fig. 16. Carisbrooke. Looking east from the gatehouse. The well is in the chamber to the left (158ft deep).  
BELOW: Fig. 17. The long straight south wall. Possibly the original location for the lean-to domestic accommodation. The current guidebook suggests this section of wall was rebuilt in the 14<sup>th</sup> century.*

