

## **BASTION (Sept 2016) (IM)**

Health and Safety

- handrail and steps
- height
- lights

### **The King's Walk Bastion, Gloucester**

- discovered and excavated 1969.
- last open 1997. Problems with occasional flooding (at Roman level ): we're below the 'water-table' here. Thanks to the City Council and City Archaeologist, an efficient pump has recently been installed to protect the monument and ensure continuous safe access.

The importance of archaeology! Gloucester's history is gradually emerging for us as more and more archaeological finds are made. The recent discoveries of the Castle remains on the Prison site are a superb example.

To reach Roman level, we have to descend more than 3m (at least 10ft). Why so? This is because levels within the Roman city rose continually as buildings were demolished and their remains were built upon. The same process has continued over the centuries.

**This site contains both Roman and Medieval aspects.**

Wall that faces us: **Roman, dating from 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> cent AD, as in Eastgate Chamber and Museum!**

NB colours of stone – blue lias (from Severn Vale) and pale-coloured oolitic limestone (from Cotswolds).

- repairs and additions over the years, some Roman, some later (incl. medieval).
- First Rn wall (where we're standing here) was built prob in the 60s AD. It was **a rampart of clay soil fronted by turves**. The construction was stabilised by timber 'strapping' laid horizontally at regular intervals (blackened remains seen here). This rampart formed the defensive wall of the military encampment, for the XXth Legion. Its layout was determined by the normal plan of a legionary camp (cf Caerleon), ie rectangular.
- Second Rn wall: **a stone structure**, (built prob 87-88AD) built after cutting into the front (outer) part of the rampart. Later there was an infill between rampart and new wall.

- This stone wall extended for approx 500m on the long (E and W) sides, 400m on the shorter (N and S) sides and was about 1800m (c 1 mile) long. [PHOTO 1]. Interval towers (on the inside of the wall) were built to strengthen defences, perhaps every 80-100m. One lies only 10m north.

The height eventually reached perhaps 17'.

- See here remains of a Rn house (early 2<sup>nd</sup> cent) built up against the inside of the wall. But subsequently demolished, to enable a road to run immediately inside the wall (defensive purposes?).

- The line of this wall, from its very beginning, enclosed the extent first of the legionary camp and then the Roman town. Its shape remained a rectangle, much like a postcard. [PHOTO 1 again]

- By the time Glevum became a 'colonia' (or retirement town for soldiers) in 97 AD (some 10 years after work started), this wall must have been complete. Since Glevum was only the third colonia in Rn Britain, it must have been a major city. Hence this wall played an important part in Gloucester's history.

- **Who built this wall?** In the Cathedral, a Roman stone has been discovered with the simple inscription that an officer of the XXth Legion took responsibility for building a section of Glevum's wall [PHOTO 2]. More than 1,000 years later, Norman builders of the Abbey (c 1090) must have taken blocks of stone from the old Rn wall. (Re-using good quality stone ('re-cycling' we might say!) has been a feature of building for centuries).

This stone proves that Glevum's Rn wall was built by soldiers, men of the XXth Legion.

- During the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> centuries (200-400 AD) there were rivalries and conflicts in Rn Britain. This led to the need to strengthen walls, either by making them higher and thicker, or by building stronger interval towers.

### **What happened after the Romans withdrew (410AD)?**

From 410 AD till 577 Romanised Britons controlled Gloucester. But in 577 they were defeated by an army of Saxons near Bath. Saxons held Gloucester for the next 500 years; during which time King Alfred's daughter, **Lady Aethelflaed strengthened the town** against the Danes (c 900). Thus some parts of the wall may be Saxon. From 1066 onwards, the Normans rebuilt the East Gate and may well have added to the walls.

**The 1200s – Barons’ War 1216. Gloucester in the front line!** In 1216, King John died and was succeeded by his son Henry III. Since he was crowned here in St Peter’s Abbey, Gloucester Castle became one of his favourite residences. However, owing to continual power struggles with the Barons, Gloucester found itself in the thick of the fighting. It was during this time that Gloucester’s defences were strengthened with Bastions. (Bastion= projecting part of a defence).

**What is a bastion?** - a semi-circular tower that projects from a fortress wall (old French). (cf the ‘Bastille’ in Paris!) [Also one in Stamford, Lincs]. [PHOTOs 3A and 3B]

- **The Medieval Bastion:** whereas the Rns had built towers inside the walls, in medieval times defensive towers were often built on the outside. Their semi-circular construction enabled better sight of any attackers and made them easier targets [PHOTO 4].

- Our King’s Walk Bastion is one of at least 3 towers that were added to the eastern defensive wall of Glr in the 1200s. (The other two: corner of Parliament St and Brunsw Rd, and also between Museum and Boots). Typically, the Bastion had a semi-circular shape, similar to remains of gate-tower in the Eastgate Chamber [PHOTO 5].

This one was constructed of roughly coursed lias and oolite limestone ‘rubble’. It’s to be noted that the bottom level is about 80cm (32”) above the chamber floor. It’s interesting to see the point **where the bastion is attached to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Cent Rn wall**, by means of ‘housed joints’.

**The Barons’ Wars (1263-5)** involved a power struggle between the King (Henry III) and a group of barons (major landowners). The city defences were strengthened to help withstand attacks and sieges [PHOTO 6]. Despite this, city and castle changed hands several times. Part of the City Wall next to the Abbey was breached; here, we don’t know if any damage occurred but the Bastion itself may well have helped the defenders fight off the enemy! Eventually the King’s forces overcame the Barons at the Battle of **Evesham** (1265).

The Bastion must have made its contribution to the defence.

The City Walls (no doubt including the Bastion!) played their part in later years:

- In the **1400s** in the Wars of the Roses, Glr closed its gates against the Lancastrian army, forcing it to march north in order to cross the Severn. This led to the Battle of Tewkesbury (1471) where they were caught and defeated by the Yorkists including the 19-yr-old Richard, Duke of Glr, the future Richard III.

- In the Civil War Siege of Glr (**1643**), Glr stood up to Charles I who blockaded the city for three weeks. Despite being bombarded by cannon, Glr held out till a relief army came to the rescue. This event contributed to the eventual defeat of King Charles and he was subsequently executed for treason. When his son Charles II came to the throne in 1660, he took revenge on Glr by ordering us to dismantle our walls!

**The King's Walk Bastion stood up to attack over the centuries as a vital part of Gloucester's defences. Had it not been for Chas II's decree, Glr's walls, the complete Bastion included, might still be here!**