

# Kings, Castles and Power

Norwich Castle dominated the city in the Norman period. It was an awe-inspiring symbol of the king's power and military might at a time when the person of the king was considered to be sacred. It was also a defensive structure.

In troubled times the Castle could be stocked with stores, livestock, and weaponry, so the garrison could withstand a long siege.

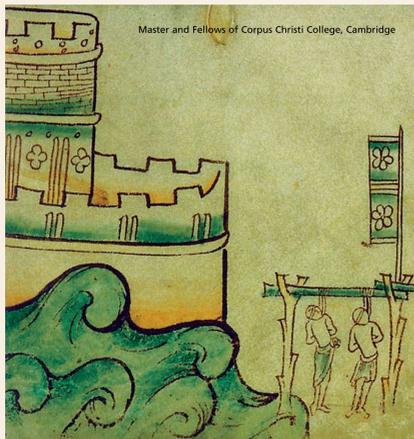
The keep also functioned as a palace when royal business needed to be conducted in Norwich.

This building was the focal point of a large complex of buildings, defences and land, known as the *Castle Fee*. In Norman times this area was controlled directly by the King.

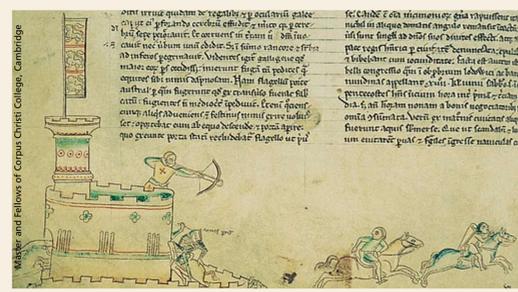
During the later Middle Ages cities like Norwich became prosperous. They wanted to protect and to govern themselves. Around the 14<sup>th</sup> century when the city walls were built, the military function of Norwich Castle declined.

Le château de Norwich était un symbole grandiose du pouvoir du roi et de la puissance militaire. Il s'agissait également d'une structure de défense. Une garnison de soldats et les officiers du roi basés au château étaient responsables de l'ordre public local. Au XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle, la ville reprit ce rôle et le château devint une prison.

Hanged offenders outside Bedford Castle. Rebellions against the King met with brutal punishment. The castle was a prominent site to display bodies of punished men as an example to others.



This image of Richmond Castle shows flags with the coats of arms of the knights who provided a castle guard as part of their obligations to the king. Similar arrangements operated at Norwich



Defending Lincoln Castle during a siege, 1217.



City walls provided protection and reduced dependence on the castle.

## The King's Men

The king relied on his officials and his garrison to make sure the castle defences were secure in his absence.

Certain landowners were obliged to send their knights to help guard Norwich Castle. The Castle was also the administrative centre of the county.

Issues like law and order, justice and taxation were handled by the king's officials. They were based at the Castle and were charged with carrying out royal orders.

The Constable kept the Castle in good repair. The Sheriff kept prisoners and hostages in the Castle, presided over court cases and collected tolls and taxes.

Long after Norwich Castle's military role diminished, the Sheriff was still in charge of local justice. The keep continued as a symbol of authority, but it was now a prison.

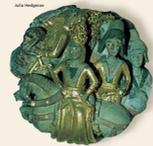


Charter confirming the City of Norwich's right to self-government, granted by Richard I in 1194.



Norfolk Record Office

Horse harnesses were decorated, like the one visible on this roof boss in Norwich Cathedral.



4 Horse harness pendant showing the arms of Edmund de Hengrave, a 14<sup>th</sup> century Sheriff of Norfolk.

Coats of arms like this showed allegiances and rank. Servants of the king and even horses wore the arms of their lords on buttons or ornaments.

NWHCM - 1894.76.224

## Objects and authority

These objects all had a symbolic purpose as well as a day-to-day use.

### 1 A Seal of Henry I (ceramic impression taken from

#### 12th century seal matrix)

Attached to documents, to prove royal commands were genuine. Images on seals tell us about medieval kingship. The king on his throne is the giver of law and justice, and on horseback is shown as a military leader.

### 2 Silver pennies of the reigns of William I, William II, Henry I, Stephen

A well-regulated coinage system, with high-quality silver coins of the correct weight, was a sign that a strong monarch was in charge. This was difficult to achieve and forgery was a constant problem. Norwich was one of a number of boroughs which had moneyers authorised to mint coins.

NWHCM - 1992.712

### 3 Castle Fee boundary marker

These are thought to have marked the boundary of the area under the control of Norwich Castle. The image of the lions from the royal coat of arms represents the might of the Kings of England.