

# [The over the river tyne by pons aelius](https://assignbuster.com/the-over-the-river-tyne-by-pons-aelius/)

[Design](https://assignbuster.com/essay-subjects/design/), [Architecture](https://assignbuster.com/essay-subjects/design/architecture/)

The Castle Keep dates back more than 1800years since being the first fortification on the site. It was part of theHadrian’s Wall, built to guard the bridge over the River Tyne by Pons Aeliusfor his Roman fort. In the 800’s, the site was then used as a church for theAnglo Saxon’s before the Normans invaded and conquered England in 1066. Thisinvasion then resulted in the castle being built by timber by William theConqueror’s son, Robert Curthouse, back in 1080. However, between 1172 and1177, it was replaced by a stone castle.

The entrance to the chapel was located “ beneaththe external stair, could only be entered only from the outside1”. The chapel itself is located towards the North East of the ground or basementfloor of the castle. As you walk in, you first enter the nave, a place toaccommodate the majority of the congregation before reaching the chancel.

It isalso likely the small recess on the left-hand side of the chancel was used bythe priests as a vestry. When the Normans took over, NormanArchitecture (also known as Romanesque Architecture due to the inspiration fromthe Roman Style Architecture) was the main influence of the design of thecastle. Castle Hedingham in Essex is another example of Norman Architecturebuilt in the same period as the Castle Keep and also similar in form. Thechapel in the keep is often referred it’s interior as “ the most beautiful placein the whole building2” and a place of “ richness of decoration3”. Examples of the influence can be seen in the arches, formed in a semi-circularshape featured throughout the nave and the chancel.

The ceiling is rib vaulted, meaning “ the surface is divided into webs by a framework of diagonal archedribs4”.  This type of vaultingis a lot more difficult to build than traditional barrel vaults. Barrel vaultsused transverse arches and not diagonal which “ allows the vault to be built insections5”, giving an advantage in construction. However, the use ofribbed vaults had much greater strength and produced less force onto the wallsnearby. Even though its arches are more geometric, the webbing of the archesstill gave an impression of being a domed vault.

“ The geometry of the Gothicsystem (Ribbed Vaults) was a rough use of mathematical truths in which beautywas sought for. 6” Looking closer into the entrances and windows ofthe chapel, I saw the Norman Architecture be used again through the decorationswith plentiful of zig-zag patterns and details such as chevrons. However, the actual techniques of creatingthe chapel can be critiqued, even though the chapel was seen as elegant andintricate with details. The construction wasn’t very thoughtful and additionallypoorly executed being very irregular in design7.

The window facingnorth in the chancel is maybe what indicates the irregularities in the design. Looking at the plans of the ground floor, it shows the window not in the centreof the two arches8. Some people might find this irritating orparanoid about the or window collapsing as the window doesn’t sit in the middlewhich doesn’t create that sense of balance, which I can agree with. Furthermore, the structure of the chapel which has been pointed out as being irregular maybe referring to the vaulting and its diagonal ribs of the groining beingrandomly laid out, particularly the one near the arch door as it hardly touchesthe supporting corbels9. Maurice Caementarius, was the engineer andarchitect who transformed the original timber structure into a stone one duringHenry II’s reign at the time. Comparing his works of the Dover Castle, it wouldseem like two different people had designed it10. His work on thechapel of the Castle Keep was inelegant and didn’t have much consideration interms of construction.

Chapels were an important part of castlesduring the medieval times as religion was a significant factor of their lives. Itwas regarded as a safe haven for the soldiers and also the locals andfurthermore described as a sense of significance and a level of prestige withinthe local area11. Having chapels in the castle also enhancedstrategic advantages as people found it a barbaric action to harm an innocentpriest which would the opposing/attacking side would then avoid12. Parts of the castle were also built as bait for the enemy, for example, somestronger structures were hidden behind some weaker structures such as theentrance tower by the chapel which has been pointed out as being considerablyweaker than the Keep. “ The external walls are very thin, only two feet nineinches13” unlike the rest of the castle’s walls which aresignificantly thicker to provide protection.

The castle wasn’t used as a defensivestructure anymore after the civil war in the 1600’s, rather it was leased outto locals which lead people to build houses and small shops14. Thearea then became known as the “ Castle Garth”. The plentiful of houses, shops, pubs were the foundation of an active community, moreover, “ the chapel in thecastle was reused as a beer cellar15” by the property-owner of theThree Bull’s Heads public house.

Even though the community was flourishing, it leadto the decline of the castle’s physical state. John Dobson, the famed architectfrom the North of England was given the commission to renovate the castle in1848. The chapel and the rest of the castle were maintained and protected toits physical state today under his regulations.  To conclude, the chapel in the Castle Keep isvery ornate and possesses some gothic architectural methods such as the ribvaulting, even from looking at my sources and also sketches that there are someerrors in the construction.

I believe with the craftsmanship could’ve beenimproved on even with regard to the cultural context. The Normans who replacedthe timber castle to a stone castle built it to a moderate standard incomparison to other castles at the time.