

There are many reasons a castle was built at pickering essay sample



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I intend to place the reasons a castle was built in a hierarchy of how important I think they are. I would say some of the reasons are of similar importance, as there would have been many reasons why a castle was built at Pickering. Although the reasons are multicausal but can be basically divided into why a castle was necessary, why the castle was built at Pickering and the domestic features of the castle. The domestic features include the chapel. The chapel was obviously built as a religious function. This suggests the Normans planned the building of the castle to be long term as well as short term, for both defending and as a place to live. And a place to worship.

In the short term I think that the main role of the castle was to defend it from attackers. Evidence of this includes the marks of the portcullis left in the entranceway. A wall walk surrounds the castle and connects the towers and shell keep.

Pickering is an example of a motte-and-bailey castle, first built from earth and timber by William the Conqueror in the early 12th century . It was rebuilt in stone and extended by the successors to the throne, notably Henry III and Edward II, depending on the threat posed at different times throughout history.

Pickering castle was used as a base for controlling the rebellions during the change of throne. The “ Harrying of the north” which literally meant the eradication of all adults and children, and of all crops and useable items, contained the rebellions from the north and scared off any other large-scale rebellions in England.

“ The harrying was so severe there was no village inhabited between York and Durham.” Over 100, 000 men women and children perished of hunger.

As well as defending themselves from the English, the Normans also had to defend against the Danes and Scots. (((Edward the Confessor died childless in 1065 leaving the throne with no heir.

The search then began for a new King of England.

Harold Godwinson was the obvious candidate as he was also the earl of Wessex and therefore had the support of most of England who would rather an Englishman took the throne rather than a foreigner. Harold came on the throne for 9 months. However all did not go to plan as Harold Hardraada invaded the north of England.

Eventually Harold Hardraada was defeated at Stamford Bridge. Harold Godwinson wasn't protecting the South. William of Normandy invaded from the south claiming Edward promised the confessor the throne to him before he died. Harold Godwinson marched his weary men down to meet them and was defeated. William of Normandy became “ William the Conqueror” and king of England; he was also the King of Normandy. He died in 1087.))

The towers seem to be very obvious and would have probably been built after the worst of the wars had passed. Other factors to observe are the drawbridge and wall walks.

The second reason I chose was that Pickering was a good natural site on which to build. Pickering castle was built on a hill; this gave the defenders a

huge advantage, as anyone attacking the castle would have to fight
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upwards. Another advantage was that the extra height meant it was a good vantage point for the defenders to see anything that could threaten the castle from miles off.

It was built on a limestone bluff, which made it difficult to attack by undermining as getting through solid limestone without being seen would have been very difficult.

Pickering was close to Beacon Hill and also the trading routes which all crossed at Pickering.

This is my second reason because it supports why the Castle was built at Pickering and not in the surrounding area.

My third reason is that Pickering is the ideal place to ensure protection of the communication routes running from north to south and east to west.

The evidence for this on site is the remains of the constables' lodgings in which taxes would have been collected by the constables. The doors were wide enough for carts to pass through so the goods could be counted properly. This meant the castle had a large income to spend on improving the castle's defences and infrastructure. Communication was easy because messages could be sent by trade routes.

Without Pickering castle messages and carts could easily get lost. Also if Pickering castle wasn't in the middle of the communication routes messages would have trouble getting to and from Pickering so easily.

The castle was built to emphasise the fact that the Normans intended to stay and not just in England in general, in this part of the country. The evidence to support this statement is the sheer size of the castle. This shows that people were planning to live in the castle; it wasn't just as an empty warning. If the castle had been small it wouldn't have been seen as so much of a threat.

Another piece of evidence is the way the castle was built, and the materials used to strengthen and enlarge the castle for example stone rather than just wood. I think that the Normans intended to establish control from the start in order to quell further rebellions.

Pickering Castle was a local power base, and was used to extend the King's authority, as Beacon Hill was visible from the castle walls. If there was an attack a beacon was lit at the castle that could be seen at Beacon Hill, and the signal was passed on. This system could be used to summon help from other strongholds nearby. This signalling system showed the Normans to be well organised and unstoppable. This also meant the King could stay at the castle and review progress.

The castle helped to exploit the area's natural resources.

Fish could be taken from the well. Also stone from the quarry could be floated down the river in barges. Of course water could be taken from the river, however this would have been easy to poison and it would be hard to carry water up to the castle especially in a siege. The well from an underground source could suggest the castle is becoming domesticated.

However it is more likely to be so the Normans water supply couldn't be poisoned.

Timber could be cut down from the forest for construction. Evidence includes the Mill Tower and the proximity of the river and local forests

In comparison to Bolton Castle windows most of the windows in Pickering castle were arrow slits.

By the 13th century the castle began to be developed by rebuilding it into stone. This is due to weaponry improving which therefore meant that the Castle defences had to improve.

A timber castle was perfect for the short term, when a castle was needed immediately. It was cheap, easy and quick to put up. Also as Pickering was near a forest wood was in plentiful supply. The only disadvantage of a wooden castle is that the wood could easily be burnt either deliberately or accidentally. In the 12th century there was no electricity and light came from hanging lamps, however they were a safety risk of their own as the holders were made of wood.

The Shell keep was the first thing to be built in stone. Serfs from the village got stone from the quarry and floated it down the river on barges to the base of the castle.

The advantages of a Stone castle are that it is harder to penetrate except by using gunpowder, which wasn't invented until later on. Also stone couldn't be burnt down, it was stronger than wood and showed greater power. A disadvantage was that it was really expensive.

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The new hall was rebuilt in 1314 for the countess Alice de Lacy, wife of Thomas, Earl of Lancaster. It was described as the Meeting Hall in Tudor surveys. This suggests that by the fourteenth century the castle was well on its way to becoming more domestic and less of a defensive settlement.

In the 14th century the castle had been completely converted into stone.

Gradually the Anglo-Saxons integrated with the Normans and the Castle became more peaceful. This meant there was less need to defend against the English. And the need for the number of knights decreased as the number of public increased. One of the reasons the castle is not complete is because villagers have stolen the stone for their houses. This would have started as soon as the castle became disused.

I think that the main reason a castle was built at Pickering was to help control northern England after the rebellions in 1069. The Normans believed that this was necessary after the Harrying of the North.

Easily the most important factor about the castle was its magnitude. For many people this would have been the biggest building they had ever seen. The castle walls looked down on the town of Pickering and its surroundings, which showed that the castle had not just the effect of physical intimidation and visual intimidation but also as psychological intimidation from seeing other people looking down on people outside the castle constantly. Other evidence includes the arrow slits, which are wide enough for archers to shoot from but high impossible for attackers to shoot into. The marks of the portcullis and the thickness of the walls contribute to the defensive features of the castle.

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In conclusion I think that this is the most important factor as the castle was built straight after the Harrying of the North when control was most necessary to quash any other rebellions.

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In conclusion the main reason a castle was built in the 11th century at Pickering was for defence, later the castle became more domesticated and eventually became a hunting lodge for Lords and Kings. Some means of defence had to be put in place in the north to control rebellions and building Pickering was his solution. In the short-term the Castle fulfilled its aim and became a castle to defend from the North and the Danes and Scots. However in the long run for other leaders to come it became very profitable as a hunting lodge. The castle has adapted through time to fit its use.