

The people who built both the Motte and Bailey Castle as well as the Stone Keep Castle were called the Normans. The Motte and Bailey Castle was built because the Normans needed a castle design they could erect quickly to bring the Saxon people under control by force. The Stone Keep Castle, on the other hand, was designed for strength and protection from the English, French and the Vikings. Some people may think that the Motte and Bailey Castle was better than the Stone Keep Castle, others believe that the Stone Keep Castle's design was best. Well I am here to discuss both points of view. This essay will examine the strengths and weaknesses of the Motte and Bailey Castle as well as the Stone Keep Castle. I will conclude by stating what castle I believe is best and why.

The Motte and Bailey Castle design had loads of positive points. Firstly, it was well stocked with food supplies because the peasants grew vegetables and grazed their animals within the bailey. This meant that it would be difficult for the enemy to border the castle and force the Normans to starve to death. The food that the knights would eat, gave them the energy they needed to fight in battle. The castle was also built on a hill, which was important because when the enemy would try to destroy the Normans, they in turn, would demolish the English by throwing things at them which created a diversion. The fact that this castle was quickly built meant that after conquering England and being in need of protection from the enemy, they could have somewhere to live. They were cheap to build which was good because they didn't have to waste money. They may be able to spend their money to upgrade their castle.

The Motte and Bailey Castle design, however, was not all positive and had some weaknesses too. For example it was made out of wood, which meant that it could be easily burnt down. Another thing is that wood also easily rots. This would mean that the castle could only be used for a short amount of time as they were not durable. The castles base was built broad, this often made defence tricky, as enemies could climb the hill from many different directions. This would mean the Normans could not stop them because they would not know which way they would come from. Wooden castles were not very strong this would mean it could fall down at any moment, and even the motte could collapse under the weight of the castle.

The Stone Keep Castle also had positive points, which made it better than the Motte and Bailey castle. Firstly they were not made from wood, so they could not easily be burnt down. Also, because they were made of stone, they could not rot. This would mean that the Normans could have the castle for a very long time and they could live in it for years and years. It was very difficult to knock down, which meant that the English had to find loads of different ways to get in, making this castle very hard for them to invade. Nowadays it would be easier to knock down the castles because we have gunpowder and bombs, but in the past they did not have access to those things. These castles could be built high which was good because it would be harder for the English to climb and attack. It was also difficult for the enemy to fire at the Norman inhabitants because of the arrow slit windows.

Although the stone keep castle walls were high enough to stop arrows from being fired, the attackers could still fire rocks, dead animals & other missiles by a trebuchet or a catapult. This meant that it was more likely that the English would still win because they had different ways of destroying the castle. Another negative thing was that the stone keep castle was square, so the corners could easily be undermined. The enemy would usually send men down a hole, make them tunnel until they reached a corner of the castle, which would cave in due to the weight of the stone castle and make it crumble away. The attackers had an advantage because the Square Keep castle took long to make and cost a lot of money. This meant that it took longer to get protection which would make the Normans vulnerable.

*As you can see both castles had strengths and weaknesses. However in my opinion the Stone Keep Castle design was best. The main reasons being: because it had more protection than the Motte and Bailey Castle; It was also built high- so the Normans could see the English trying to attack- making it easier to defend the castle; and it was built out of stone which would not easily burn down or rot. Although it took longer to build it was more durable and safe.*