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# A short guide to Tretower, Bronllys and Builth Wells castles in Brecknockshire

*by the Clwyd Powys Archaeological Trust*

**Tretower Castle and Court** (OS national grid reference SO18462125) are situated in the valley of the Usk between Abergavenny and Brecon, 3 miles north-west of Crickhowell. The remains include a motte and bailey castle with a later round tower and a restored courtyard house of 15th century date.



The castle consists of a motte and bailey which were built during the Norman conquest of Brycheiniog. In the 12th century the wooden buildings were replaced in stone. A shell keep was built around 1150, a hall and solar were erected to the south-west side of the motte and a kitchen was built at a slightly lower level. In the early 13th century the inner walls of this range were demolished and a round tower was built. Today it is this tower which dominates the castle site. The tower has three storeys each with a single room with a fireplace and a window. The foundations of the tower contain a basement. Within the curtain wall of the castle are the remains of a small, rectangular gatehouse.

**Tretower Court** was built during the 14th century with alterations made in the 15th century. The buildings are arranged around a courtyard with the oldest along the north wing. This 14th century wing consists of a rectangular building of two storeys. The main rooms are on the upper floor. In the 15th century west wing there is a hall, solar and service rooms. The building was altered in the 17th century. A 15th century gatehouse stands on the east side with a postern gate to the north. The house and its curtain wall have been much restored in modern times.



**Bronllys Castle** (SO149347) dates from the mid 12th century. The small motte is surmounted by a round stone tower similar to that at Tretower. To the north are two baileys each with a bank and ditch. The sites of bastion towers may be detected where there are breaks in the bank and ditch of the outer bailey.

**Builth Castle** (SO04395103) is situated on the edge of a high bluff within the town of Builth. It was built by Philip de Braose in the 1090s as a timber and earth motte and bailey. During the next century it changed hands between Welsh and Norman owners and was rebuilt in stone in the 1240s. It was taken and destroyed by the Welsh in 1260.

Between 1277 and 1282 it was completely rebuilt by Edward I. In 1282 it was held for the king by John Giffard who may have been involved in the death of Llywelyn the Last who was killed nearby in December 1282.

The stone castle had a tower keep surrounded by a curtain wall with six turrets. A gatehouse with two towers protected the inner ward. Unusually the castle has two baileys both of which

originally had stone walls.

Following a fire in the town in the late 17th century the castle was robbed of its stone for the construction of new houses. Today only the large earthen motte and baileys survive.



#### *Access and parking*

**Tretower Castle** and Court are in the village of Tretower just off the A479 to the north-west of Crickhowell, Brecknock. Parking is available. The sites are in guardianship and an entrance fee is payable. Use of personal audio tapes describing the castle and its history are included in the entrance fee. Further information from:- 01874 730279. Free access to Cadw sites is available for school parties. Telephone 01222 500200.

**Bronllys Castle** lies just south of the village immediately east of the Talgarth to Bronllys road. Access is free. Parking is available in the layby opposite the castle which lies in a small wood. **Builth Castle** lies at the eastern end of town and is approached via a sign-posted footpath just west of the Wye bridge road and next to the Lion Hotel. Parking is available next to the river. *Ordnance Survey Landranger maps 147 & 164*

*The above information comes from the Sites and Monuments Record of the Clwyd Powys Archaeological Trust. For further information about the historic environment of this area, contact:-*

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