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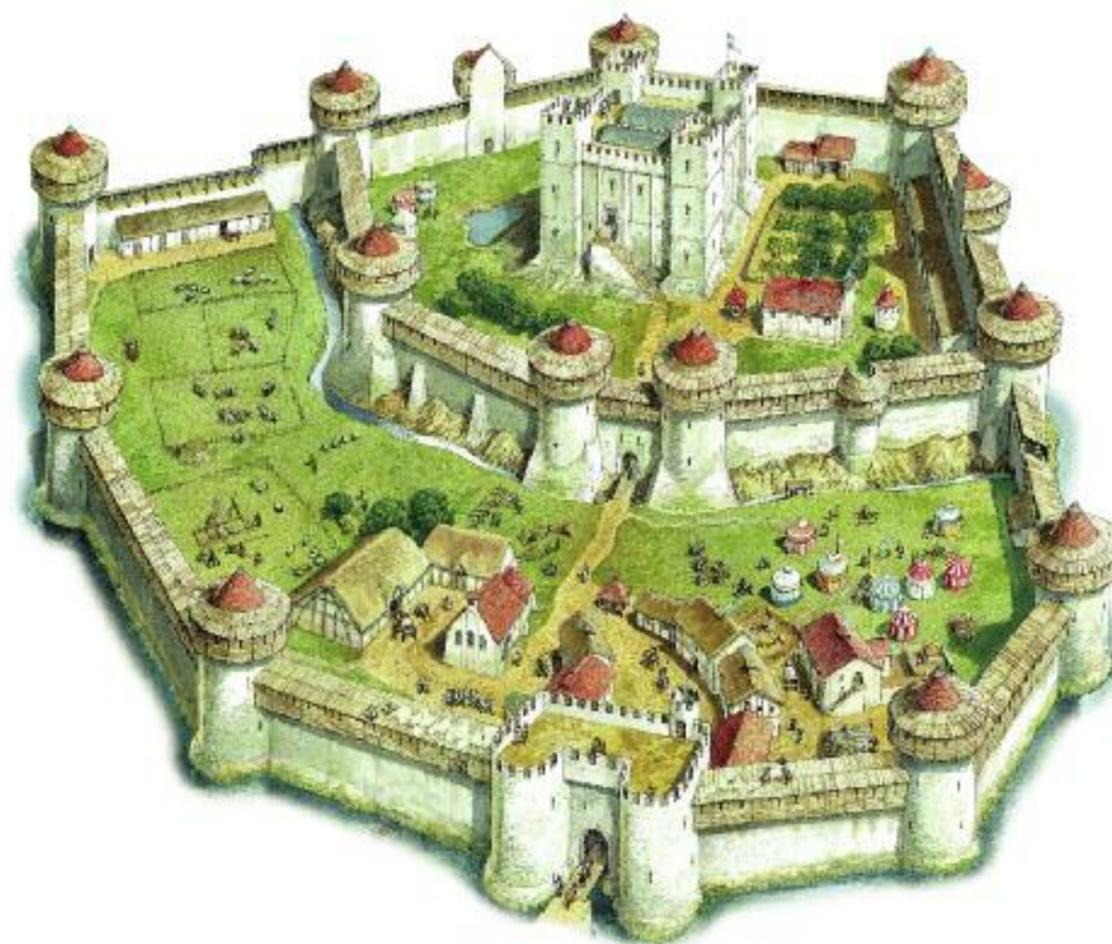
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# CASTLE CHALLENGE



**W**  
FRANKLIN WATTS  
LONDON • SYDNEY

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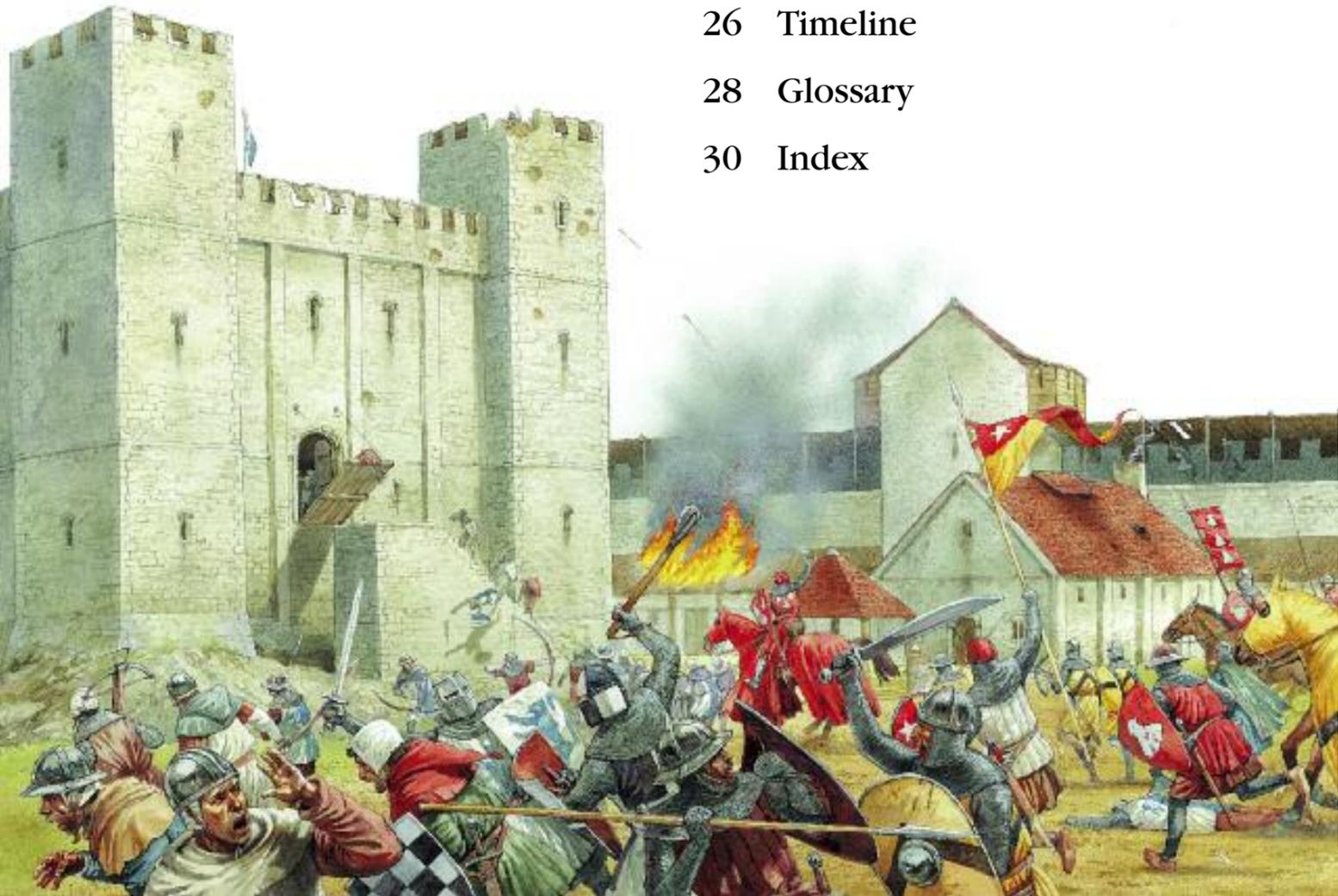
# Your challenge

The year is 1300 and times are troubled. Your king is being challenged by some powerful nobles who want to seize power. As his most loyal troop commander, he is sending you to quash the rebellion. Your target is the leader of the nobles, a rebel lord whose stronghold is his gleaming new, well-defended castle.



Your challenge is to capture the rebel lord and so put an end to the rebellion. If you can do this without a fight, so much the better, but you have the king's authority to besiege the castle if necessary. If you succeed, you can be sure your king will reward you, perhaps even giving you some of the rebel lord's land and property. But this is no easy task. He is very ambitious and his castle is strongly fortified with a garrison of well-trained soldiers. You need to plan your strategy carefully to give yourself the very best chance of success.

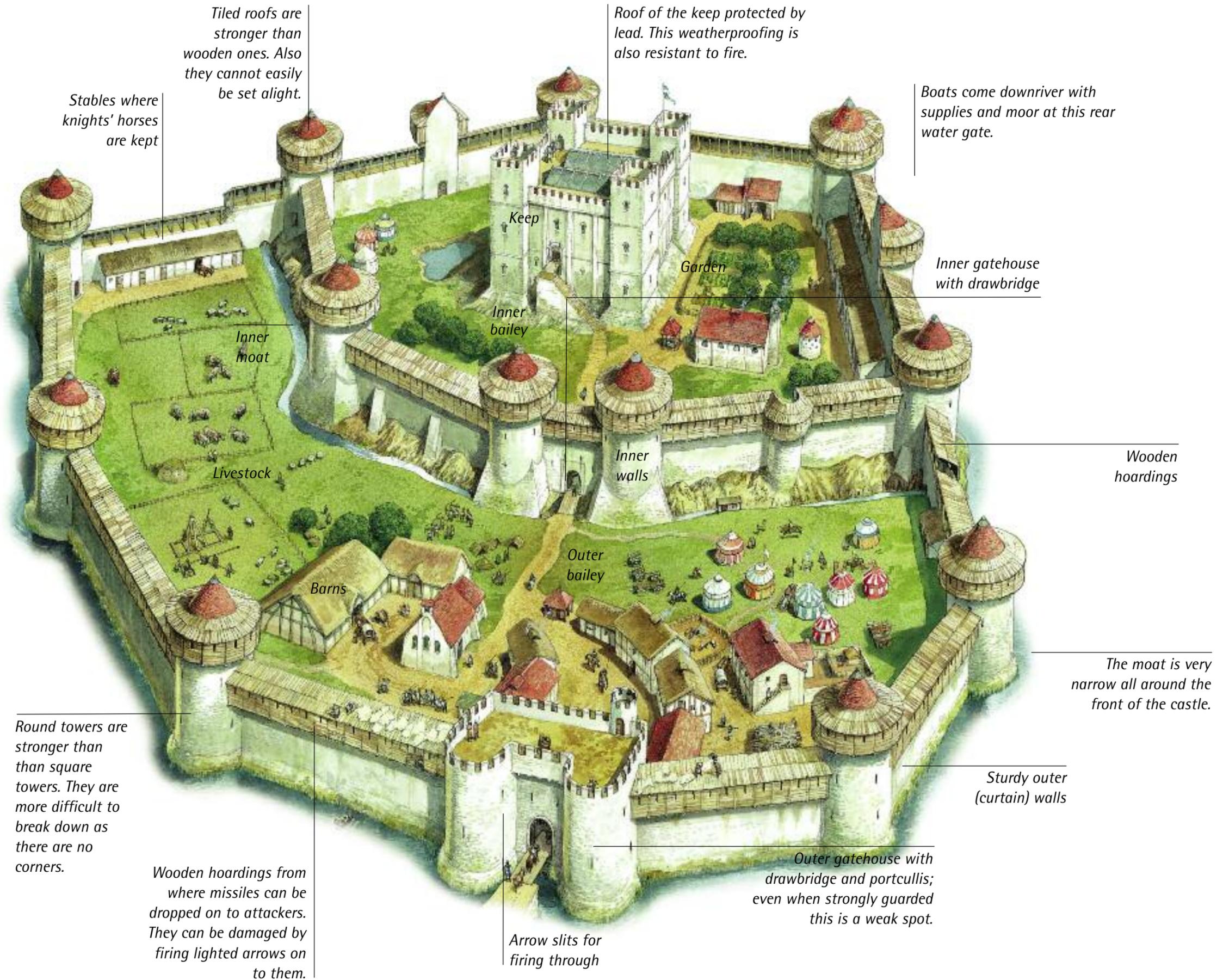
This guide will take you through the campaign step-by-step. It will show you how to find out as much about your target as possible and explain the best strategies for a successful attack. It will tell you about your troops, show you what sort of weapons you will need and, if necessary, how to carry out a long siege. Armed with all this information, can you successfully capture the castle? Will victory be yours?



# Planning your attack

The castle is a massive stronghold with formidable defences. It is positioned on an island with water all around it. You will somehow have to bridge this to get to its walls. The castle is also in excellent repair. The walls are sound and topped by wooden hoardings, from where the defenders can safely attack your troops. There is an inner bailey, protected by a second set of strong walls and another moat. The garrison defending it is obviously well-trained. Guards regularly patrol the walls and keep a sharp lookout from the towers. And last but not least, you should be aware that the castle is very well supplied for food with livestock and grain stored in the barns.

On the other hand, the castle is not without its weaknesses. The moat in front of the castle is very narrow and shallow and you should be able to infill it or bridge it without difficulty. There is access to the castle from the river through a water gate that is not well guarded. The gatehouse with its wooden drawbridge is vulnerable to a direct attack: if you can batter a way through the entrance then you have no need to scale the walls or attempt to make a breach. This castle has a large number of towers. These are structurally weaker than the walls, so your assault should concentrate on them. Note also that the wooden hoardings running along the tops of the walls are susceptible to attack by fire.



# Before the siege

*Remember, it is not just brute force that will secure success. There are other actions you can take before you attack that are equally effective. These include: sending spies into the castle to glean information; disrupting the castle's food supplies and preventing the movement of enemy troops. The more information you can gather about the land, the castle, its lord and its people, the better.*

**R**ecruit spies from your own loyal followers if you can. Men posing as mercenaries make excellent spies as they will be told about the castle's defences as part of their job. You could also use local merchants or craftsmen who have legitimate business at the castle. Things spies can find out include:

1. how many people are in the castle
2. weak spots in the castle's defences
3. how large the garrison is
4. how food and water are supplied
5. how prepared the castle is for an attack.



**I**f your spies tell you that additional troops are on the way to help defend the castle, organize an advance party to ambush them before they get there. You could also attempt to capture the lord of the castle. If successful you can hold him until he surrenders.



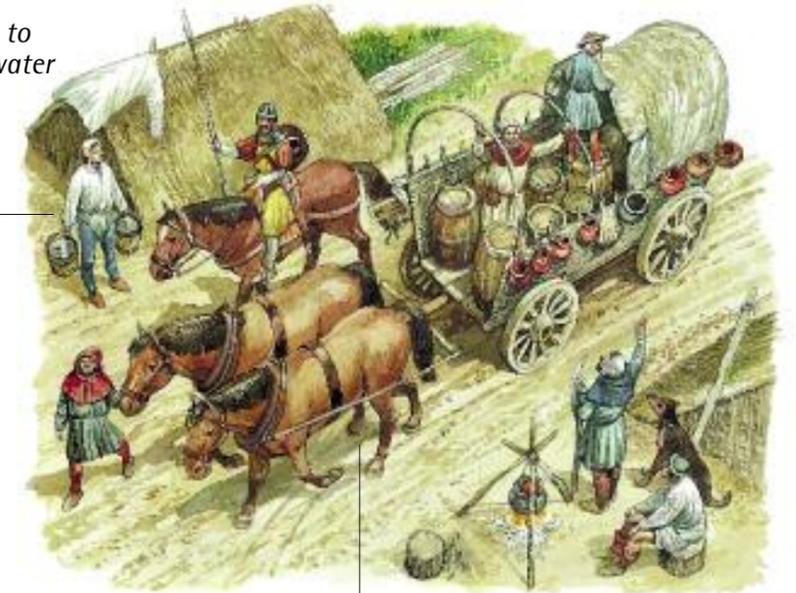
**E**ncourage local people, particularly women and children, to enter the castle. They will be no use to the defence of the castle, but at the same time use up vital food and water. The defenders are much more likely to surrender if they are hungry and thirsty.

## GOOD SPYING TIPS

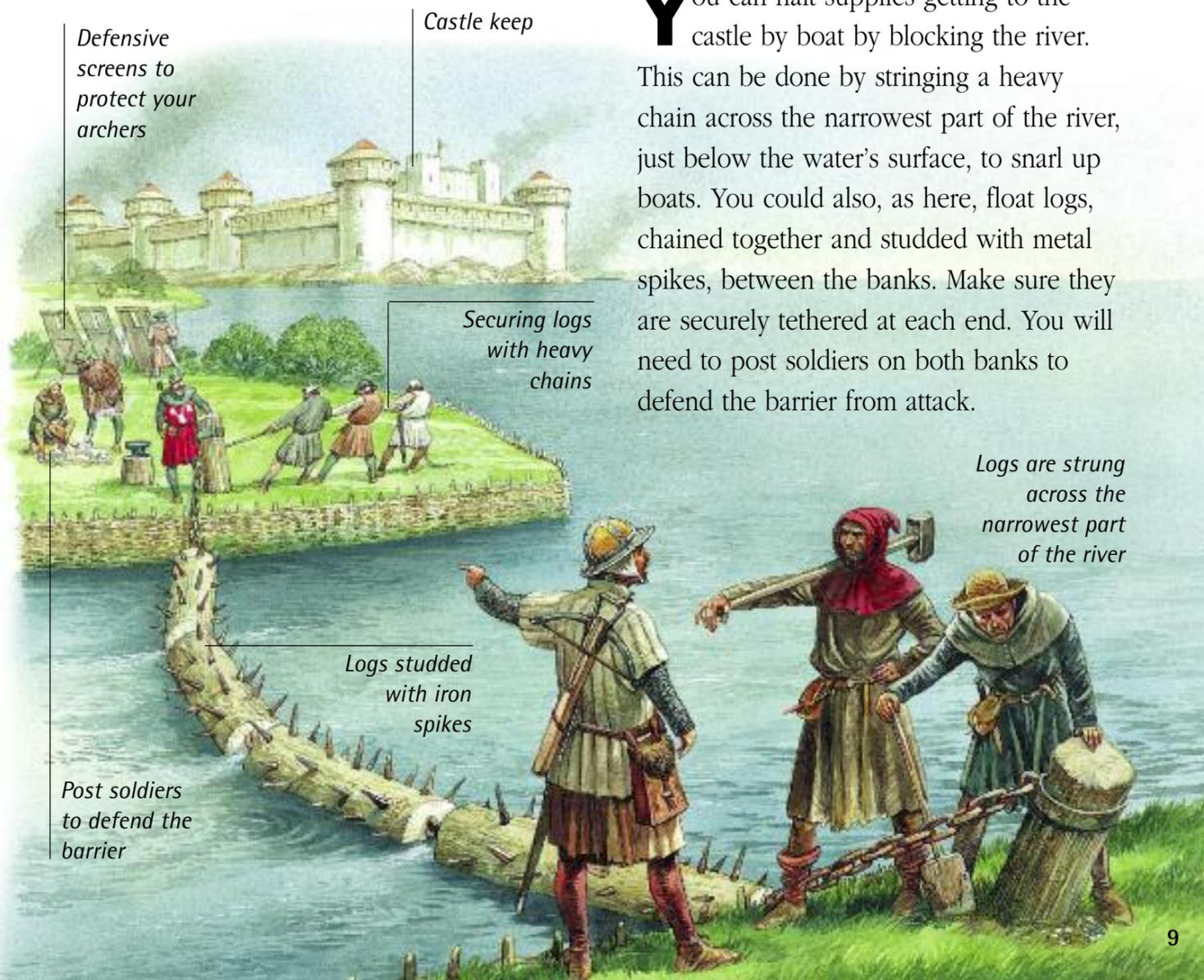
1. To keep your spies loyal, make sure they are well paid.
2. Brief them carefully so that they understand exactly what they have to do.
3. Train them to use sabotage, for instance attacking guards or spoiling the water supply.

**I**t is essential that your own troops are well supplied. Remember, they fight better on a full stomach. Make contact with merchants and negotiate with them to sell you food, clothing and weapons. In addition, you may need to raid local farms and villages for provisions. It is wise to destroy anything you don't need to prevent any supplies getting to the defenders in the castle.

Access to fresh water is vital



Maintain good relations with merchants to ensure supply



Defensive screens to protect your archers

Castle keep

Securing logs with heavy chains

Logs studded with iron spikes

Post soldiers to defend the barrier

Logs are strung across the narrowest part of the river

**Y**ou can halt supplies getting to the castle by boat by blocking the river. This can be done by stringing a heavy chain across the narrowest part of the river, just below the water's surface, to snarl up boats. You could also, as here, float logs, chained together and studded with metal spikes, between the banks. Make sure they are securely tethered at each end. You will need to post soldiers on both banks to defend the barrier from attack.

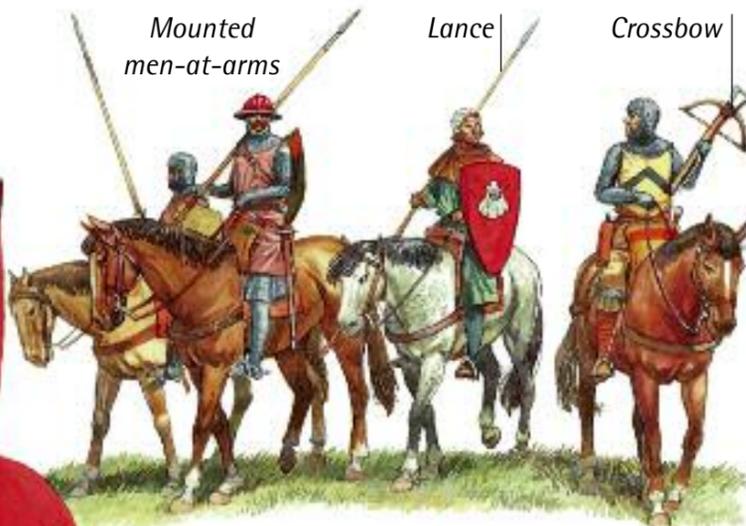
# Your soldiers and their weapons

How good is your army? The better trained and equipped your men, the greater chance of success you will have. Your troops will consist of knights, mounted men-at-arms, footsoldiers, bowmen and mercenaries (hired soldiers). As well as your fighting men you will also need cooks, carpenters, smiths, a priest and a surgeon or two to tend to the sick and wounded. A good armourer is vital. He will make, repair and maintain your weapons and armour. Here are the fighting men and their weapons that you will have under your command.

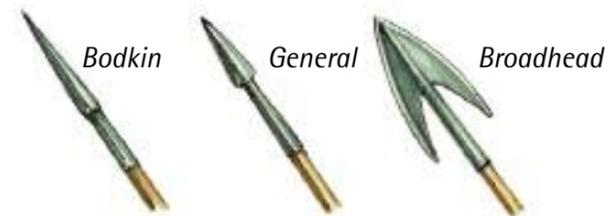
*Knights are high-ranking soldiers, trained in battle skills and horsemanship since childhood. But they are also expensive!*



Your footsoldiers will be both ordinary men, pressed into service as part of their rent to their lord, and mercenaries. They wear quilted tunics, helmets and chain mail, to protect them when fighting. Their weapons include axes, glaives, slingshots and maces.



Mounted men-at-arms are not as high ranking as knights. They fight on horseback and use lances, bows, swords and maces. Knights will invest in expensive metal armour to protect both them and their horses. Poorer men-at-arms might only afford chain mail and helmets for protection.



Bowmen are a vital part of your troops: include both longbows and crossbows. Longbows are as tall as a man. They are accurate with a long range (200 metres or more). A good longbowman can shoot 12 arrows a minute. Choice of arrows is important too. The barbs on a broadhead make it difficult to pull out. A bodkin will punch through a knight's armour with ease.

## Shooting a crossbow

Winding back    Placing bolt    Taking aim



## Shooting a longbow

"Nocking" arrow on to bow string

Preparing to shoot

Taking aim



Crossbows use a metal-tipped bolt rather than an arrow. Unlike longbows, you don't need any special training to shoot a crossbow, but they are slower to repeat-fire. A crossbow can be left "cocked", that is, wound back with the bolt in place so that it is ready to shoot instantly. It is accurate and powerful at short range, and some can shoot as far as a longbow.

*Glaive: used for stabbing and slashing. Useful against mounted soldiers.*

*Mace: heavy enough to smash helmets and body armour*

*Sword: for slashing and stabbing in close combat*

*Axe: Long pole and sharp, well-balanced blade make this an efficient weapon against armour.*



# Setting up camp

**D**uring your earlier reconnaissance you will have identified a site for your army to camp. It should have access to fresh water and be close to the castle – but well out of range of the castle’s archers. Busy your men immediately with erecting tents and temporary shelters. Use local materials such as wood and turf. Detail some men to make defensive palisades and ditches around the camp. Your engineers should start work on siege weapons. Cooks, armourers and smiths should all set up straight away.

Farm burnt down by defenders to prevent you getting supplies from it

Digging ditches and erecting a palisade

Armed advance party approaches castle to discuss terms.

Lookout tower facing castle

Trebuchet

Woodland felled for timber

Corralled livestock

Horses

Commander's tent

Commander

Building siege engines

Practising fighting techniques

Priests

Armourer

Raising tents

Temporary shelters built from wood and turf

Building banks and palisades from earth and sharpened stakes

Cooks

Butchering meat

Dismantling an old building for wood

Trees cut for timber

Fresh-water supply

New troops arriving

Keep your men occupied with useful tasks.



*Be wary of strangers approaching the camp. That innocent-looking beggar could well be a spy sent by the castle's lord. Caution your men not to engage in idle conversation. They could easily let slip some vital piece of information, such as when you are planning to attack. If you suspect you are dealing with a spy, you must imprison him immediately.*



*By now, the lord of the castle will know you mean business. Before battle commences, it is standard practice to send your herald to announce your planned attack. If the castle's lord thinks your forces are too great, he may send a messenger back to negotiate with you, and if you're lucky, even surrender without a shot being fired.*

# Castle defences

It is important to be aware of what defensive measures might be used against you, so that you can counter them. The enemy will be actively preparing for the battle. They will be gathering ammunition, including rocks to hurl at you, and heating sand and oil over braziers to pour on your troops. The garrison will also be busy fireproofing hoardings by nailing fresh animal hides to them. They will raise the drawbridge and post lookouts so that they will know immediately you make your first move. They will interrogate, imprison or even kill anyone they think might be a spy. So it is possible that your spies might be captured. Not only could your plans be revealed, but you also might also lose the chance to sabotage the castle from the inside.

*Animal hides nailed to the wooden hoardings hinder the spread of fire from lighted arrows.*

*Hinged wooden shutters between the stone merlons protect archers when they shoot.*



*Archers have a good view through slits in the walls to shoot on your troops, but it's virtually impossible for you to shoot back through the narrow holes.*



*The enemy can shoot arrows or pour hot oil and sand on to you from "murder holes" in the hoarding floor or gatehouse ceiling. Hot sand finds its way through chinks in armour and scorches the skin.*



Lookout in tower

Defending knight, fully armed

Brazier for heating sand

Stone ammunition for hurling

Arrow slit

Murder holes

Interrogation of family by captain of the guard

Portcullis

Archer in place at arrow slit

Building hoardings

Vaulting to make gatehouse fireproof

Drawbridge being raised

Spy being gaoled

Oubliette

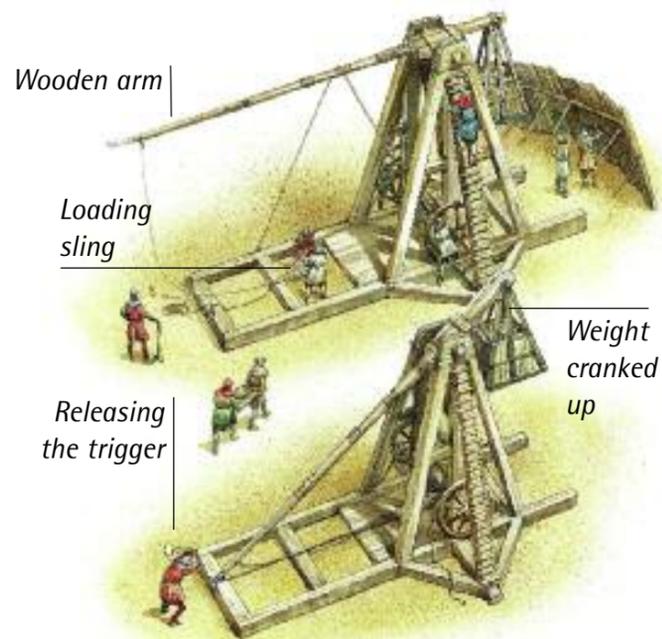
# Your siege weapons

Your aim is to force the castle to surrender. You could achieve this by starving the enemy into submission, but this takes time. It's much quicker if you can attack with such force that the enemy cannot resist. Powerful siege weapons will help you gain access to the castle. These engines are designed to bombard the castle, smashing walls and gates. Once your men have access they can overrun the castle – but remember the enemy might have their own siege engines to use against you.

## Trebuchet at moment of firing

The trebuchet is one of the largest weapons in your armoury, so you'll need to build it on site. It is really a giant catapult that throws objects with great force. It is deadly accurate and can fling missiles up to 200 metres. As well as hurling rocks at the walls, you can also lob missiles *into* the castle – such as the severed heads of enemy prisoners.

## Heavy counterweight



## Operating a trebuchet

The trebuchet has a long arm with a heavy counterweight at one end and a sling at the other. To operate, load the sling, wind up the counterweight and lock in position. When you release the trigger, the weight drops, driving the arm upwards and flinging the missile into the air. Some other unpleasant missiles you can consider are dead animals (to spread disease) and fire pots.

## Winding mechanism for cranking arm into position

## Ammunition for use in trebuchet

### Heads of executed prisoners



### Dead animals



### Fire pots

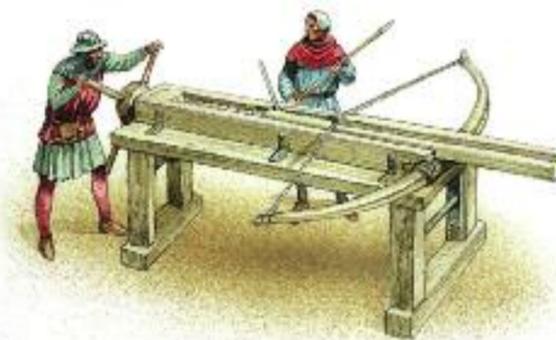


### Rocks, rubble etc.

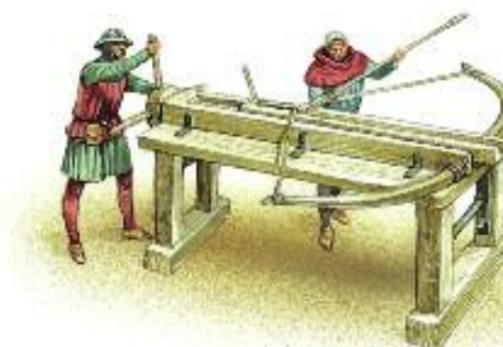


The mangonel also catapults missiles, but from a closer range. It is smaller and easier to move than the trebuchet. It consists of an arm and cup mounted on a wooden frame. The power is provided by a tightly wound rope. To operate, you need only two men. One winches the arm back – this also twists the rope – and locks it in position. The other loads the cup then releases the arm. The twisted rope springs back thrusting the arm forwards. The movement of the arm is halted by a padded beam, but the missile continues onwards with considerable force. The mangonel is very effective for smashing walls.

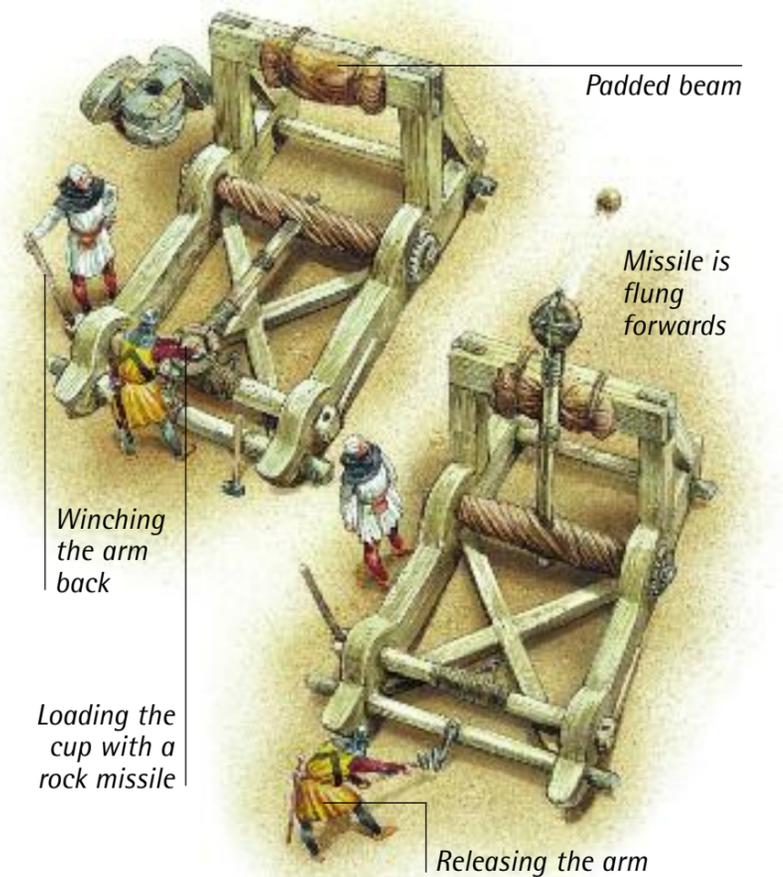
## Operating a ballista



One man winches back the drawstring and locks it into position.



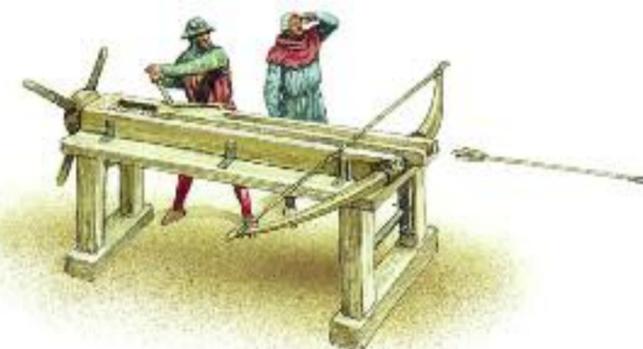
The second man loads the ballista with a large arrow or javelin.



## Operating a mangonel

The castle's defenders are likely to have their own siege engines. The ballista is the one to watch out for. This is like a giant crossbow. To operate, the drawstring is winched back using a cranked wheel. It is then loaded with a massive arrow – more like a javelin – and fired by releasing the drawstring with a lever. The ballista is good for accurate aiming. You might want to use ballistas too, for attacking specific targets. But unlike trebuchets or mangonels, they won't help with destroying walls.

The first man releases the drawstring with a lever, shooting the arrow with great speed and accuracy.



# The siege is underway

The time has come. If negotiations fail, you must launch your attack without delay. What methods are available to you for an effective storming of the castle? Your trebuchet and mangonels can hurl rocks at the walls. Infilling the moat with rocks and turf (see below) means your men can reach and scale the walls. You can now also position a siege tower to access the top of the protected high walls. And don't forget the simple battering ram. You can protect it from enemy fire by covering it with a roof of wood and hide.



Crossing the moat and setting up scaling ladders

Archers protected behind wooden mantlets

Infilled moat

Siege tower gives access to the top of the walls.

Defenders try to winch the battering ram out of the way.

Defenders position a mattress to soften the blows of the battering ram.

Defending archer at arrow slit

Trebuchet and rocks for ammunition

Mangonel hurling rocks

Men using slingshots

Bringing water to douse the flames

Infilled moat



To protect men filling in the moat, construct a moveable penthouse, a sort of shed on wheels. This can carry the materials they need and be wheeled into position with ease. The wooden roof will protect them from arrows. Its covering of fresh animal hides will help make it fireproof.



Load up the penthouse with fascines (bundles of green sticks), turf, and baskets of earth and stones. The men drop the fascines, earth and stones out of the covered open front of the penthouse into the moat, creating a temporary bridge. Finally, they top the infill with turf to stabilize it.

# Surviving the siege

The castle may hold out if it is expecting a relief army to come to its aid. If you suspect this is the case, get instructions to your spies to find out what the defenders are doing to resist your siege. You need information about the castle's military preparations, food supplies, living conditions, state of health and general morale.

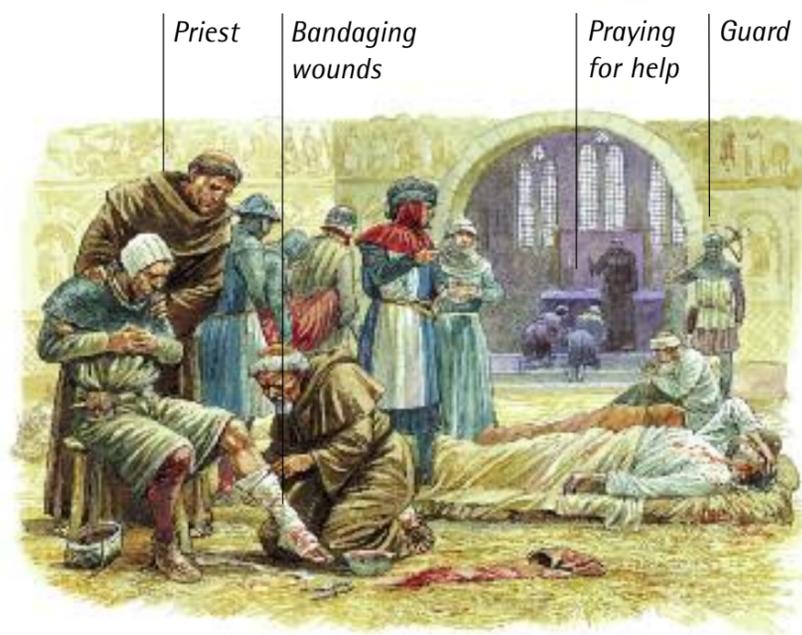


Part of the chapel has been made into an emergency hospital. Priests and women are tending to the sick and injured. Sickness has broken out among the people inside, possibly as a result of your tactic of catapulting in diseased animal carcasses. Morale is low. The priests are constantly offering comfort to villagers who are praying for the relief army to come to their aid.

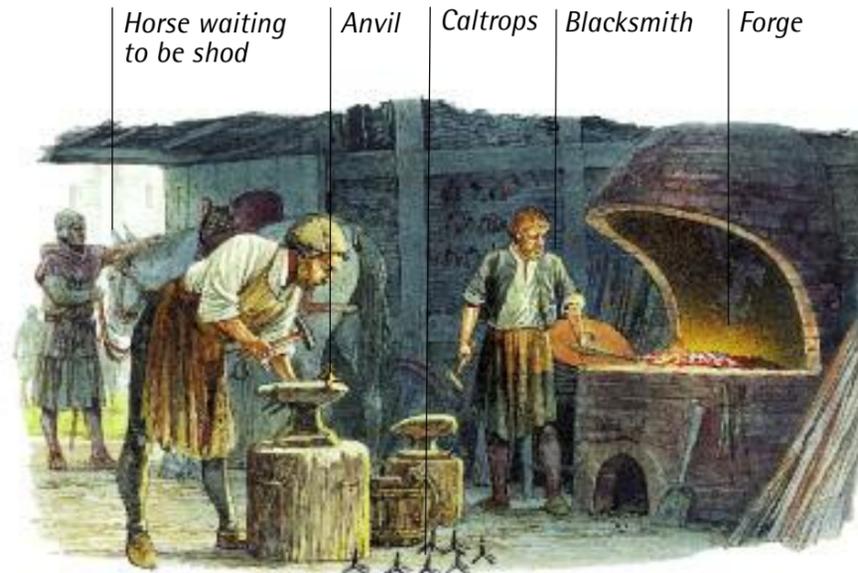


The lord has ordered that all food in his garden be harvested and put in store. The animals will also be in need of food and water. If food starts to run out, the defenders may decide to kill their livestock for meat. They can dry and salt the meat to preserve it so that it will last a lot longer.

A lot of preserved and dry foodstuffs are stored in the basement of the towers. Stores are carefully monitored and, if the siege continues, supplies may be rationed. Have one of your spies check up on the steward as he takes stock of supplies. If they are running low, you want to know about it.



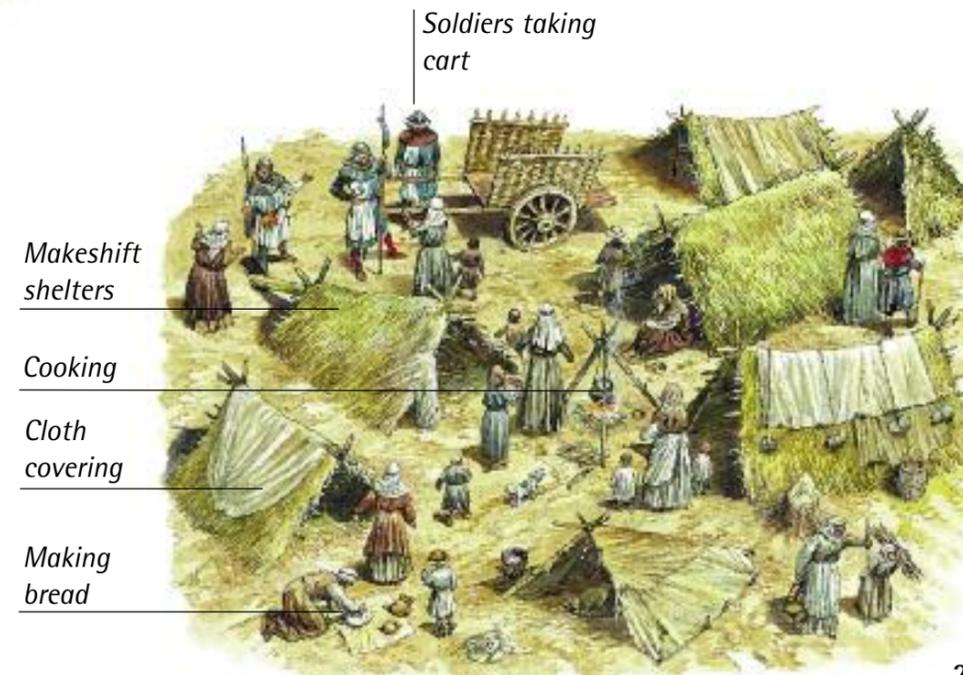
The smith's main task is to ensure all the horses are properly shod in readiness for any counter-attack. These smiths are making caltrops – four-pronged spikes that always point upwards, no matter how they fall. They are designed to be scattered on the ground to injure horses when they tread on them.



The castle's armourers are being kept busy too: repairing chain mail and armour, sharpening old weapons and forging new ones. The lord has ordered that all weapons be inspected and repaired if necessary. Making chain mail is a skilled and laborious business. First

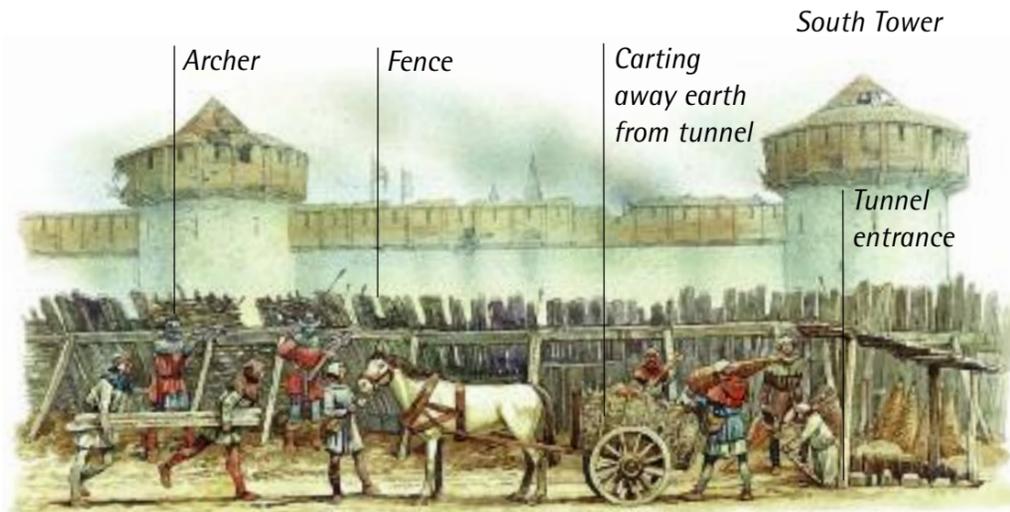
you make a coil of wire, then you snip the wire through at the same point on each coil to give you several split rings. Each ring is then threaded through four more and riveted closed. Mail has the advantage of being much lighter and more flexible than armour.

Many villagers moved into the castle for safety when danger threatened. They have built makeshift shelters in the outer bailey from wood, cloth and turf. Morale in their camp is not good. It has been wet and cold and there is little food. Soldiers have commandeered a villager's cart for the wood to help build defences.



# How to undermine a tower

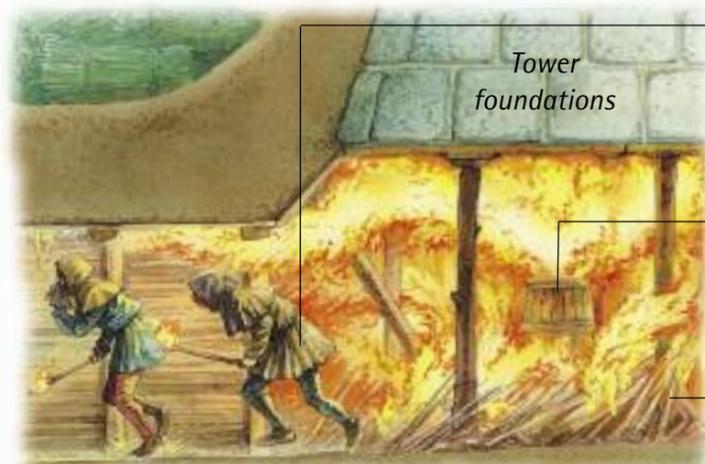
The siege is taking too long. Your spies have told you that the enemy is preparing to counter-attack, and there may be a relief army on the way. You have to act quickly. You decide to undermine the South Tower. This means digging underneath it so that it collapses. It's a dangerous operation. But if it works, you will be able to overrun the castle.



The first part of the plan is to dig a tunnel under the tower. You must go about this work without the enemy suspecting. First, build a fence.

The enemy will think this is just a shield for your archers. In fact it will be hiding your miners. Detail men to cart away the earth and carry the wooden piles.

It will take several days to dig beneath the tower. Make sure you dig down well below that moat. Fix wooden piles to support the sides and ceiling.



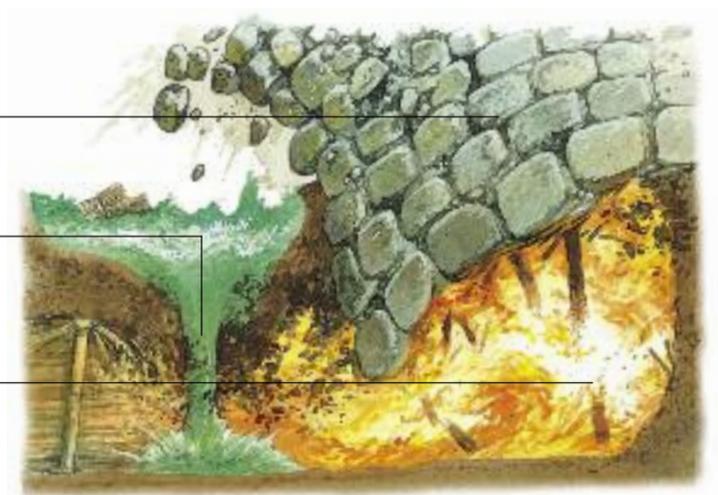
While your miners are underneath the tower, they must keep quiet. Support the stone foundations with the wooden piles. Place a barrel of tar and some kindling, and set light to it. Get your men out as quickly as possible.

With luck, the fire should burn away those piles within minutes. The roof of the tunnel will then fall in and the stone walls above it should collapse into the tunnel.

Stone walls collapse

Moat drains into collapsing tunnel

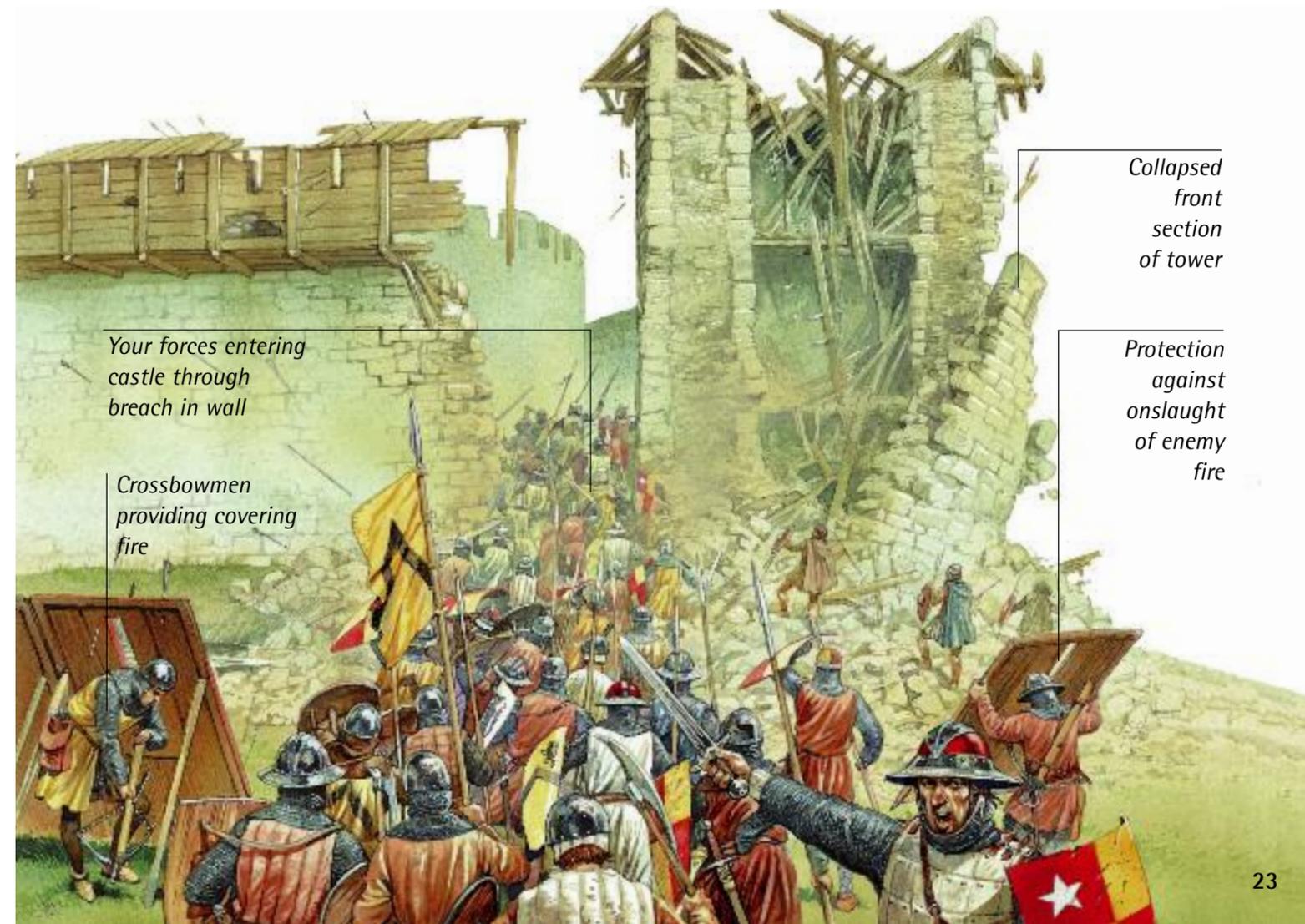
Burning piles give way



This is a lengthy and dangerous operation. The tunnel may collapse or be blown up by the enemy. The moat may flood it. But the advantage is that, if all goes to plan, you should be able to break into the castle very quickly. The walls are extremely heavy, so any collapse will cause a great deal of damage to a large section of them. The enemy will be taken

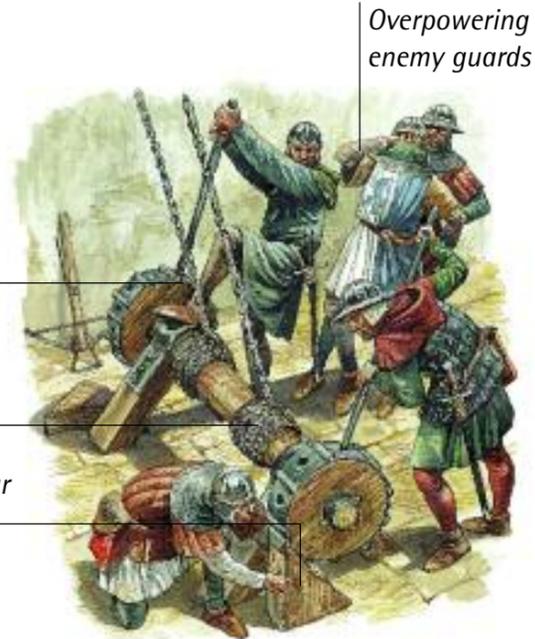
by surprise, so it is unlikely they will have any more men than usual defending that part of the walls. You, on the other hand, can get your forces through the gap in minutes.

You must, at all costs, prevent the enemy from hearing about the tunnel. Avoid leaking information to enemy spies by revealing your plan to as few people as possible.



# Taking the castle

If your plan is successful, the South Tower will collapse and you can now overrun the castle. Don't, however, expect the enemy to give up without a fight. You still have to breach the inner bailey. The lord and his entourage will be holed up in the keep and you can be sure that it will be fiercely defended. Assuming you succeed, you also have to decide what to do with your prisoners, in particular, the lord of the castle.

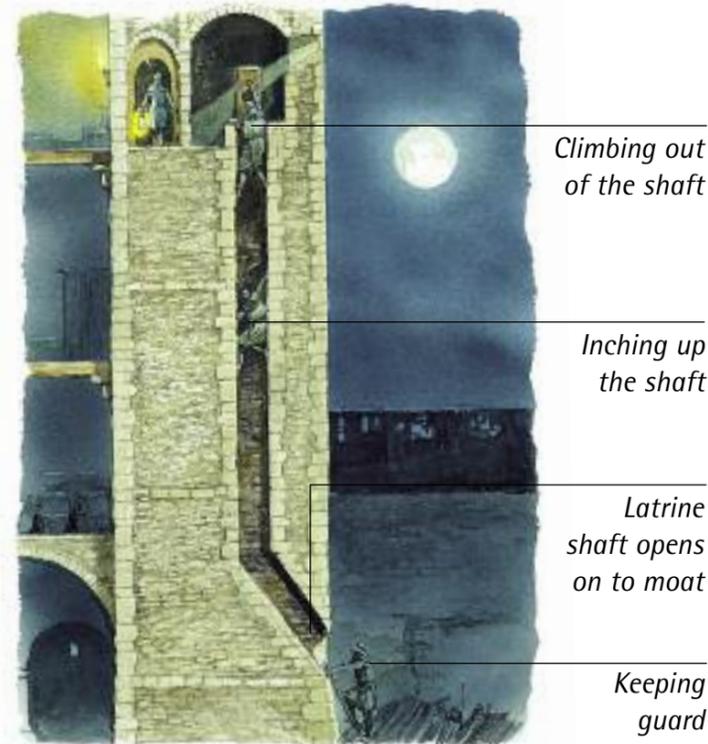


Overpowering enemy guards

Winching open the gate

Gate winding gear

Removing wedge so gate can be opened



Climbing out of the shaft

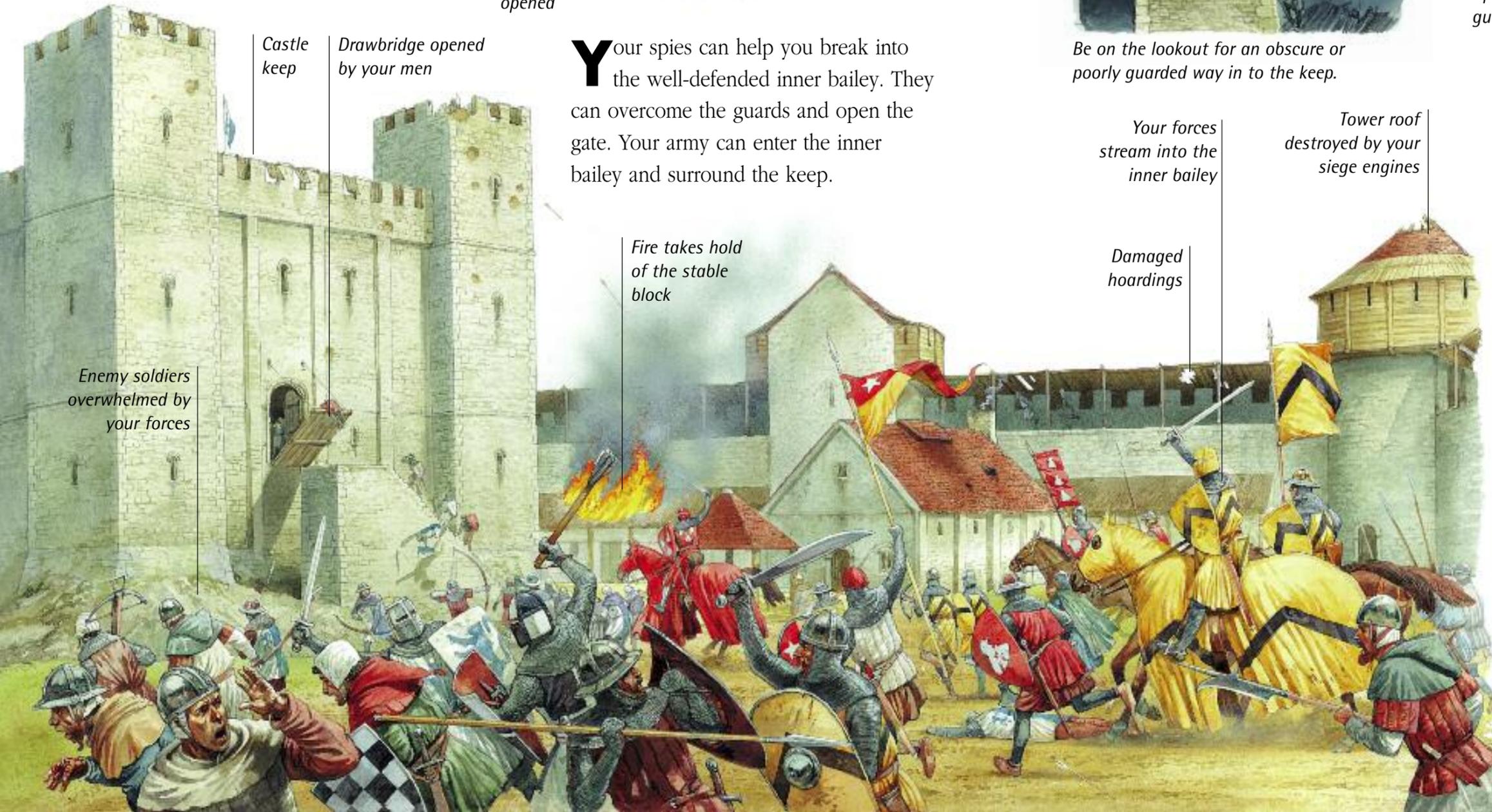
Inching up the shaft

Latrine shaft opens on to moat

Keeping guard

Be on the lookout for an obscure or poorly guarded way in to the keep.

Your spies can help you break into the well-defended inner bailey. They can overcome the guards and open the gate. Your army can enter the inner bailey and surround the keep.



Castle keep

Drawbridge opened by your men

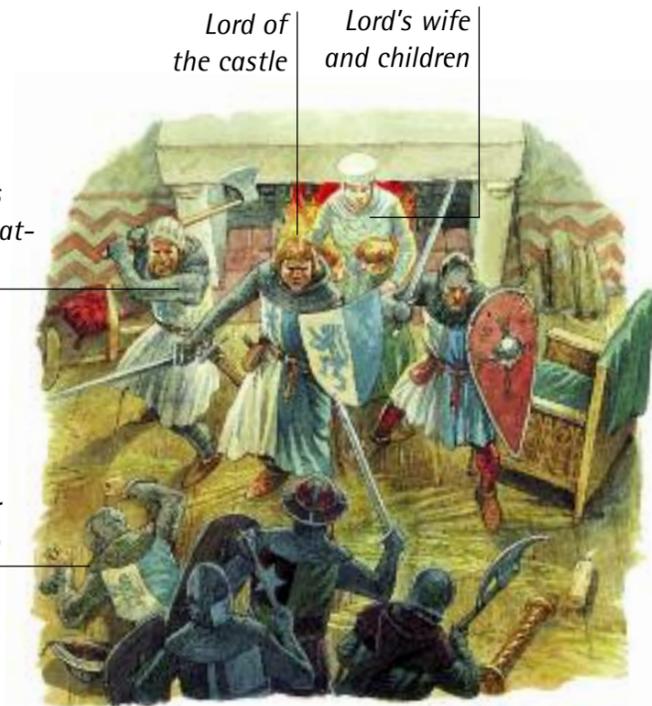
Enemy soldiers overwhelmed by your forces

Fire takes hold of the stable block

Damaged hoardings

Your forces stream into the inner bailey

Tower roof destroyed by your siege engines



Lord of the castle

Lord's wife and children

Lord's man-at-arms

Your men

To get into the keep itself, you may have to use stealth tactics. Look for an unusual way in that's unlikely to be guarded, such as a latrine shaft. Once inside, your men can open a side door. Send an armed party to the main entrance to overcome the garrison there and open the final barrier – the gate and drawbridge to the keep itself. You can then concentrate on finding the lord of the castle and demanding his surrender.

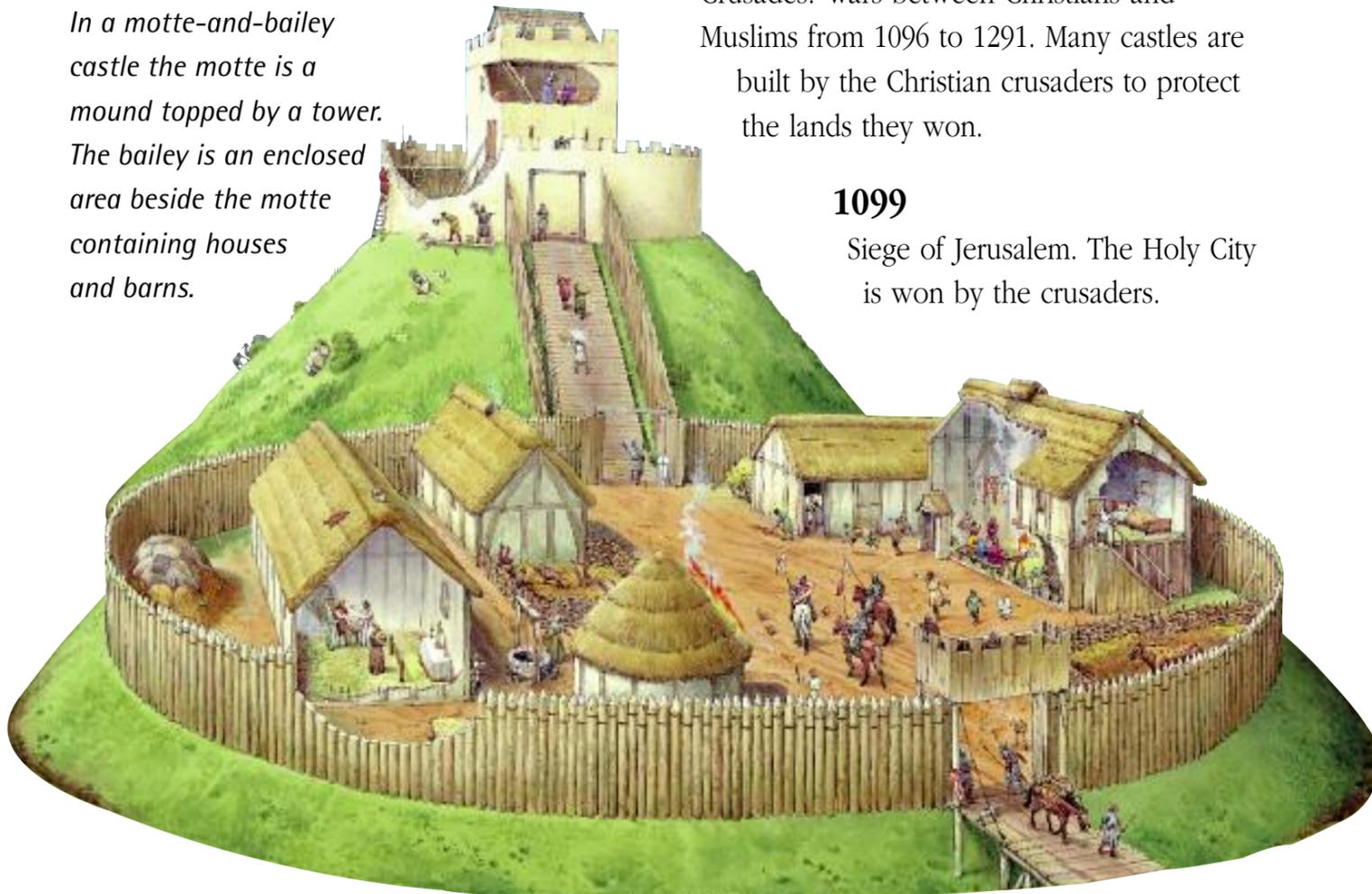
At last! You burst in with your men. The lord and his family are guarded by only two men-at-arms. Although he puts on a brave show, the lord knows it's all over. It's your decision what happens next. If at all possible, capture him and his family alive. You can accept his surrender and come to terms, agreeing what will happen to him, his castle and his men.

Victory is yours!

# Timeline

The styles of castles vary across the world, but all originally had the same purpose: to provide an impenetrable stronghold against an enemy. The earliest European castles were called motte-and-baileys. They were little more than wooden forts built on a hill – or motte – next to an enclosure, called a bailey. As time went on the wooden buildings were replaced by stronger stone structures that could withstand fierce attacks. The great age of castles ended when cannons eventually became strong enough to blast through the thickest of stone walls.

*In a motte-and-bailey castle the motte is a mound topped by a tower. The bailey is an enclosed area beside the motte containing houses and barns.*



*Keep castle*

**950**  
Earliest European castle built in Anjou, France.

**1000s**  
Motte-and-bailey castles built in Europe.

**1066**  
Norman Conquest of England. William I builds 87 castles, including square stone towers called donjons or keeps.

**1096–1291**  
Crusades. Wars between Christians and Muslims from 1096 to 1291. Many castles are built by the Christian crusaders to protect the lands they won.

**1099**  
Siege of Jerusalem. The Holy City is won by the crusaders.

**1100s**  
Keep castles are developed. These have extra walls surrounding the keep tower.

**1150–1250**  
Major castle building across Germany.

**1200s**  
Features of crusader castles, such as portcullises and rounded towers, are introduced into European castles.



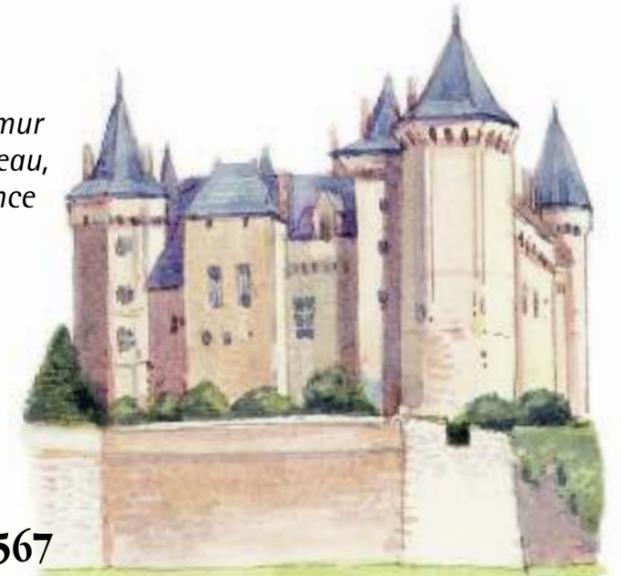
*Neuschwanstein, Germany*

**1272**  
The great crusader castle Krak des Chevaliers falls to the Muslims.

**1337–1453**  
Hundred Years War in Europe. Active period of castle warfare.

**1429**  
Siege of Orleans. Joan of Arc fends off the English besiegers and wins back the French city.

*Saumur chateau, France*



**1567**  
Siege of Chitor in India. The city falls to the Moghuls who attacked with cannons.

**1582–1615**  
Great period of castle building by Samurai knights in Japan. Siege of Osaka 1615.

**1600s**  
Cannons are now powerful enough to destroy the strongest castle walls. Many castles ruined or abandoned. Some turned into private homes, for instance Saumur chateau in France.

**1800s**  
Castles, such as Neuschwanstein in Germany, built as luxury houses rather than fortresses.

*Samurai castle, Japan*



# Glossary

**Arrow slit** A narrow opening in a castle wall through which arrows were shot (1).

**Bailey** An area enclosed by castle walls. This was originally the enclosed, defended area adjoining a **motte** (2).

**Ballista** A **siege engine** like a giant **crossbow**.

**Battering ram** A large beam used to break down walls or doors of defending building.

**Battlements** The top of a wall with a series of gaps (**crenelles**) between raised portions (**merlons**). Also called crenellations (3).

**Caltrops** Four-pronged metal stars thrown on the ground to injure horses' and soldiers' feet.

**Chain mail** Flexible armour made up of interlocking metal rings.

**Concentric castle** A castle with two or more sets of walls for added security.

**Crenelles** The spaces between **merlons**.

**Crenellation** *See* **battlement**.

**Crossbow** A mechanical bow using short bolts rather than arrows. *See also* **ballista**, **longbow**.

**Curtain wall** A wall between two towers (4).

**Drawbridge** A wooden bridge across a ditch or moat in front of a castle **gatehouse**. Can be raised and lowered (5).

**Dungeon** A prison cell in the basement of castle. *See also* **oubliette**.

**Fascines** Bundles of sticks used to infill a moat.

**Gatehouse** A heavily fortified castle entrance. May have a **drawbridge** and a **portcullis** (6).

**Glaive** A weapon consisting of a blade on the end of a long pole.

**Hoardings** Wooden gallery attached to the top of a castle wall with holes in the floor, through which defenders attack the enemy.

**Joust** An entertainment in which two knights fight on horseback with lances (7).

**Keep** The fortified tower at the centre of a castle (8).

**Keep castle** An early style of castle consisting of just the square keep tower.

**Knight** A mounted soldier who served a lord.

**Longbow** A large, powerful wooden bow.

**Mace** A metal club used in combat.

**Machicolations** Stone structures that stuck out from the top of a wall with gaps through which to fire or drop missiles on attackers below (9).

**Mangonel** A stone-throwing **siege engine**.

**Mantlet** A wooden shield on wheels.

**Merlon** The solid part of **battlements** between **crenelles** that protected a defender.

**Moat** A dry or water-filled ditch surrounding a castle (10).

**Motte** A mound, often man-made, on which a castle was built.

**Motte-and-bailey** An earth mound (**motte**) with a wood or stone **keep** next to a courtyard (**bailey**) surrounded by a fence and ditch.

**Murder hole** An opening in the ceiling through which defenders could fire or drop missiles on enemies below.

**Oubliette** A pit under the floor for holding prisoners. Reached by a trap-door (11).

**Palisade** A defensive wooden screen or fence.

**Penthouse** A covered cart used to protect attackers infilling a **moat**.

**Portcullis** A heavy wood and iron protective grille, or pair of grilles, inside a **gatehouse**, raised and lowered in grooves by ropes or chains (12).

**Siege engine** A large weapon, such as a **battering ram**, **trebuchet** or **mangonel**, used to attack a castle (13).

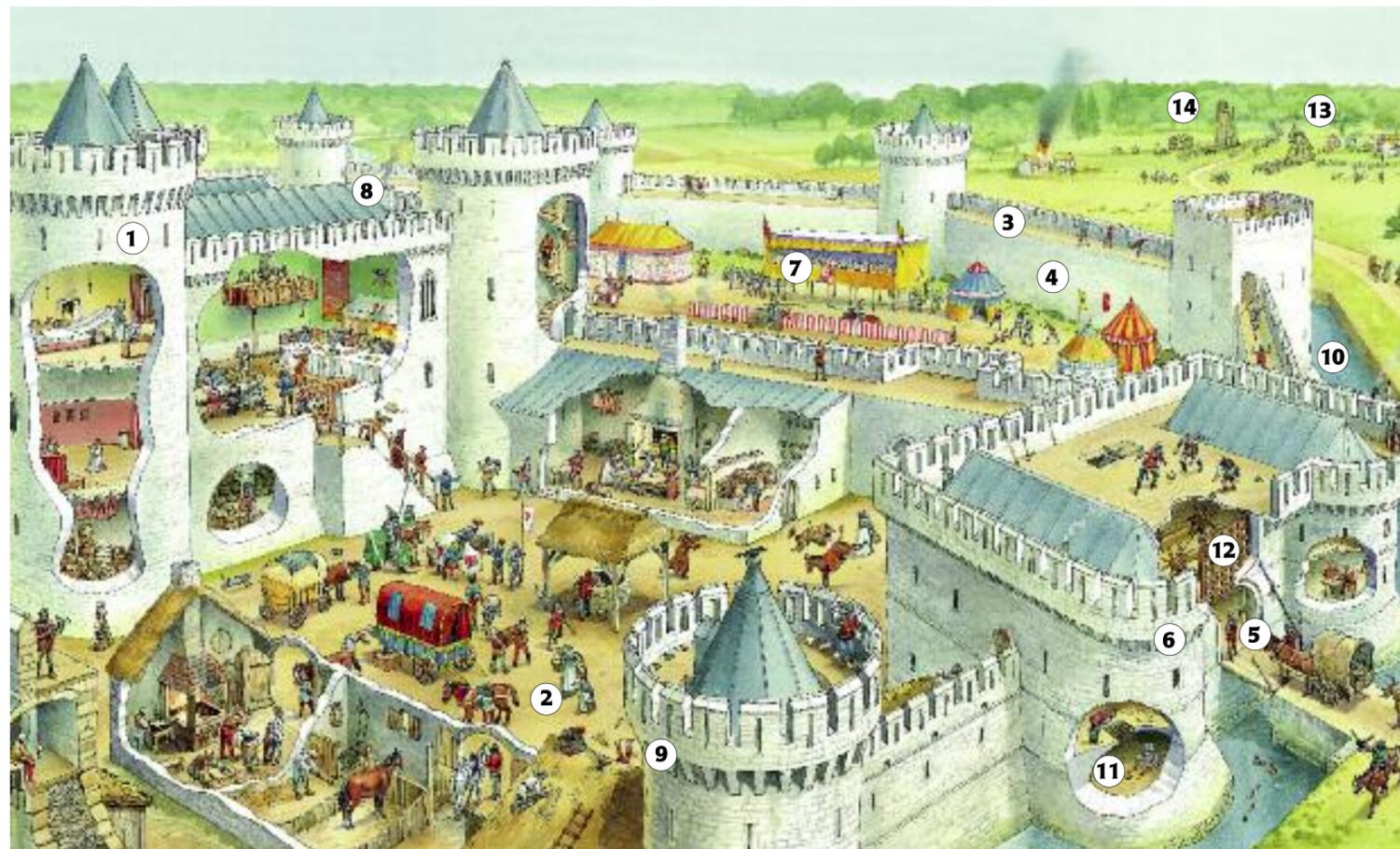
**Siege tower** A wooden tower on wheels, which attackers used to climb over castle walls during a siege (14).

**Steward** An official in charge of running a lord's estate.

**Tourney** A mock battle for knights.

**Trebuchet** A powerful **siege engine** which worked like a large catapult.

**Undermining** Digging beneath the foundations of a building to make it collapse.



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