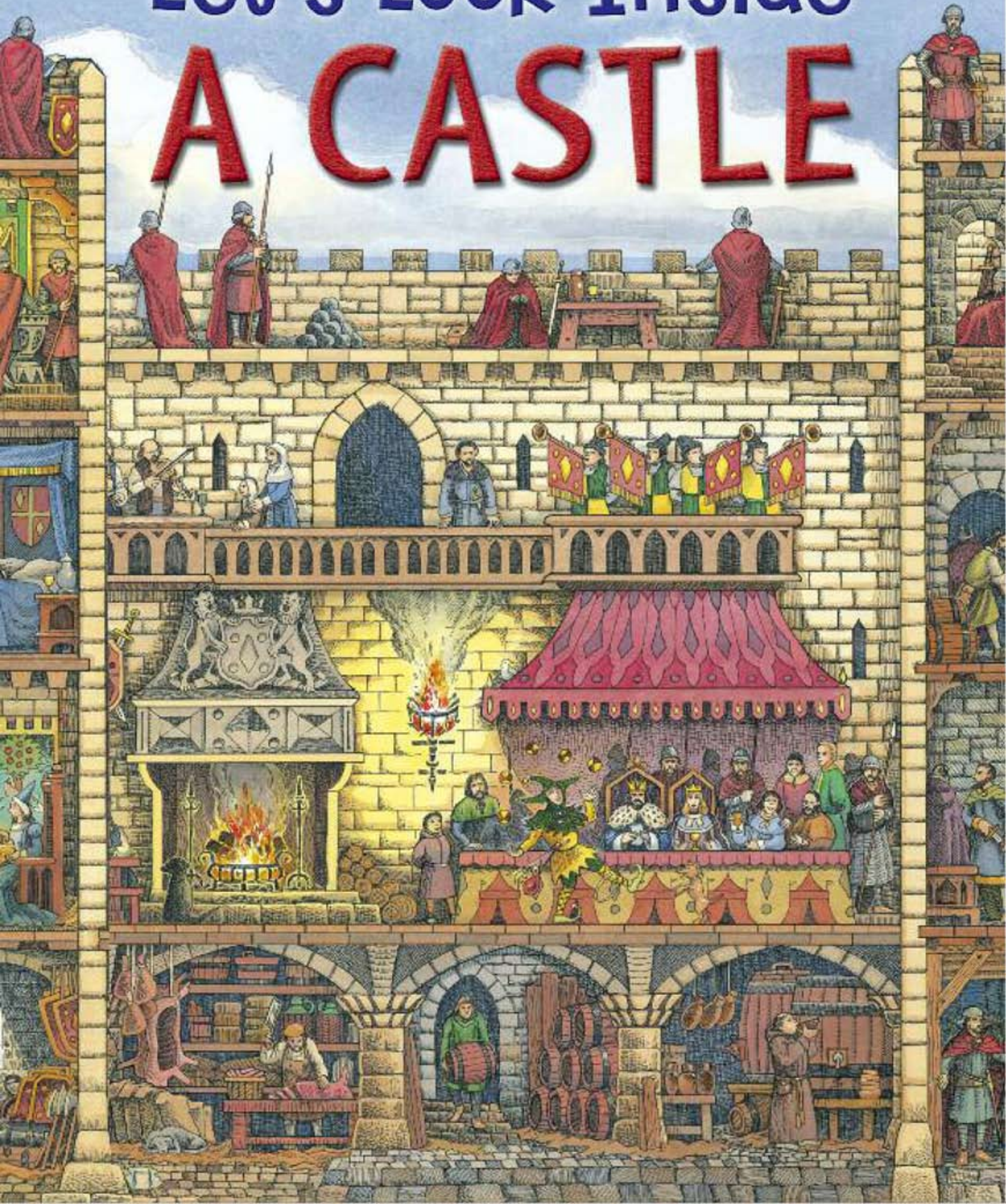


# Let's Look Inside A CASTLE



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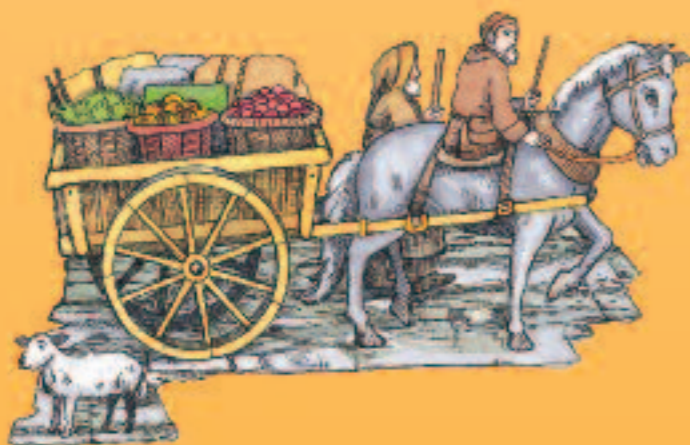
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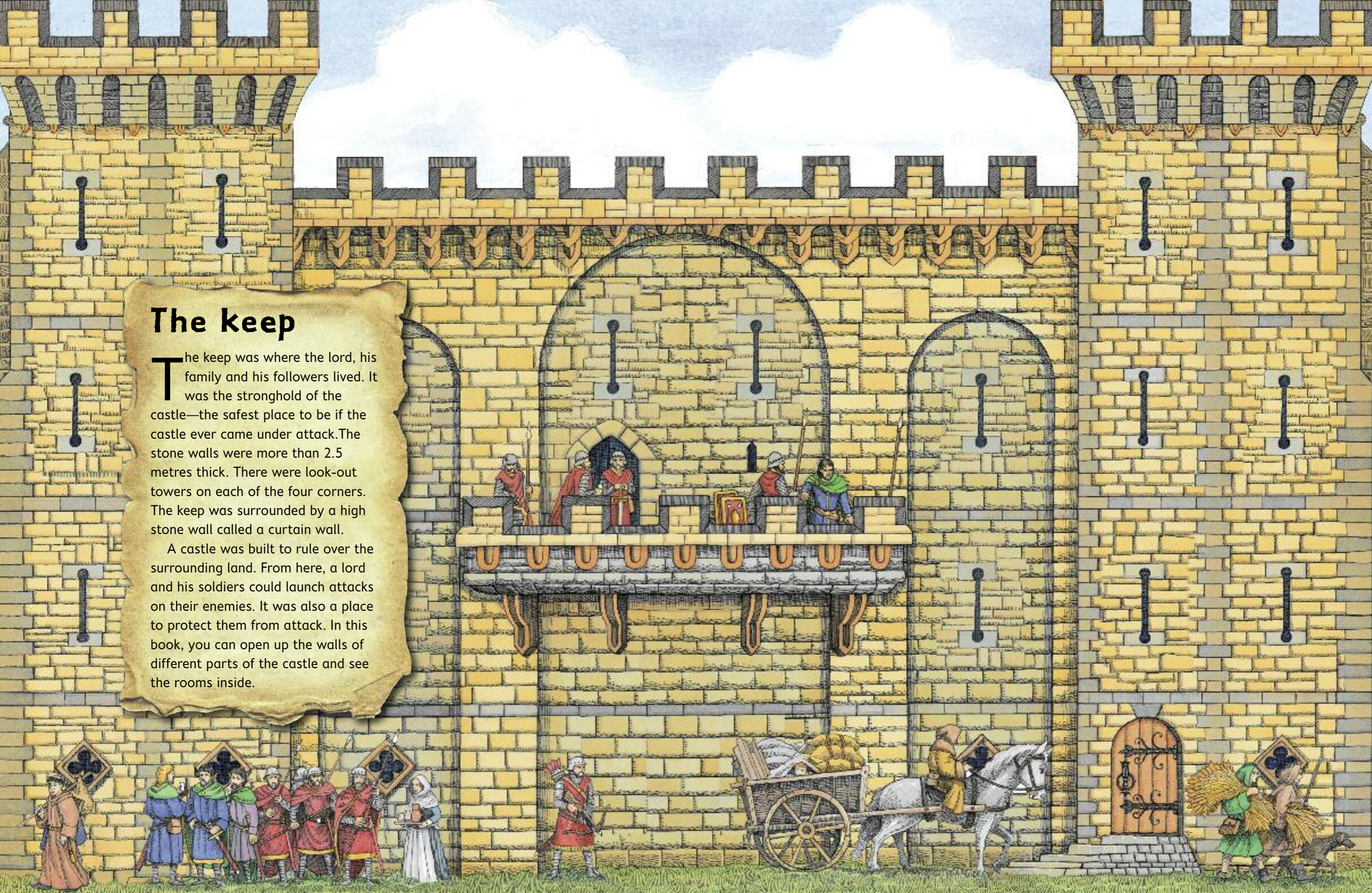
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## The keep

The keep was where the lord, his family and his followers lived. It was the stronghold of the castle—the safest place to be if the castle ever came under attack. The stone walls were more than 2.5 metres thick. There were look-out towers on each of the four corners. The keep was surrounded by a high stone wall called a curtain wall.

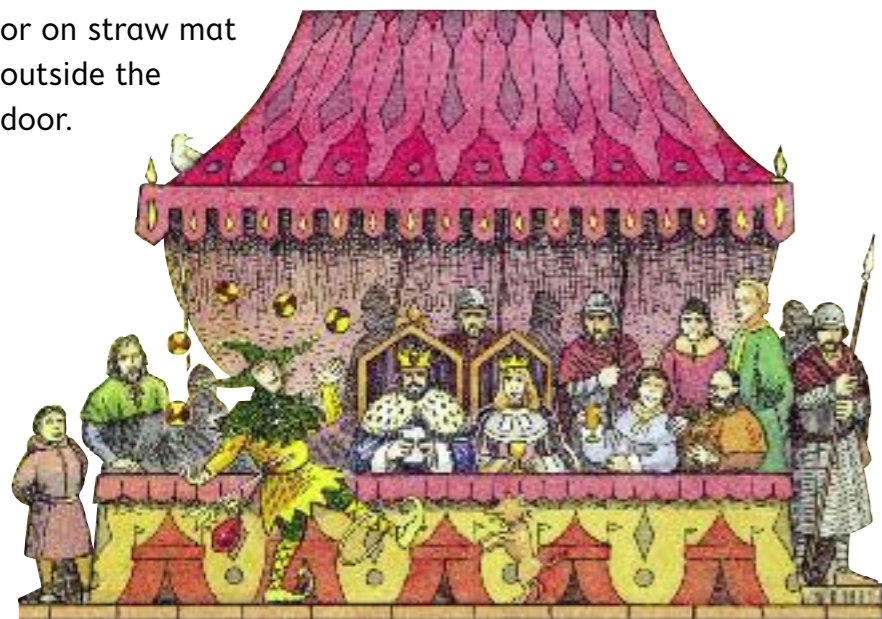
A castle was built to rule over the surrounding land. From here, a lord and his soldiers could launch attacks on their enemies. It was also a place to protect them from attack. In this book, you can open up the walls of different parts of the castle and see the rooms inside.





# Inside the keep

The lord and lady lived in grand style. They used their castle home to entertain guests with lavish meals. After dinner, they would retire to their lavishly-decorated private living room, called the solar, in one of the towers (*right*). The lord might play a quiet game of chess in front of a roaring fire. In this castle, the master bedroom was above the solar. The lord's servant guarded him at night, sleeping on a small bed in the same room, or on straw mat outside the door.



While the diners feasted, musicians played from the gallery (*right*) and jesters juggled and told jokes. The banquet lasted several hours. After the lord and lady and their guests retired to bed, their followers and servants rolled themselves up in their cloaks and slept on the straw-covered floor in the basement storeroom (*below*).



On special occasions, great banquets were held in the Great Hall, the largest room in the keep. Servants brought in the dishes. They served the lord and lady and their guests first. They sat at the top table, which was covered by a linen tablecloth, and ate from gold and silver plates (*left*). The other diners sat at trestle tables. They ate from trenchers, slices of stale bread.



Most castles were built during the Middle Ages, also known as medieval times, the time in history that lasted from the 1000s to the 1400s. In those days, Christianity was very important to most people. Some men and women became monks and nuns. They lived in abbeys, monasteries or convents, spending their lives in prayer. Friars (*above*) were monks who lived in the community, travelling about from place to place.



The chapel (*above*) was the highest room in the castle. Here the chaplain led a short service for the lord and his family every morning. Some castles had a larger chapel in the bailey (courtyard) for the use of other residents. The chaplain was the best educated person in the castle, so he had the extra responsibility of teaching the lord's children to read and write and learn passages from the Bible by heart. The chaplain was also called upon to keep records of the castle's financial accounts and to take note of all punishments given out by the lord.



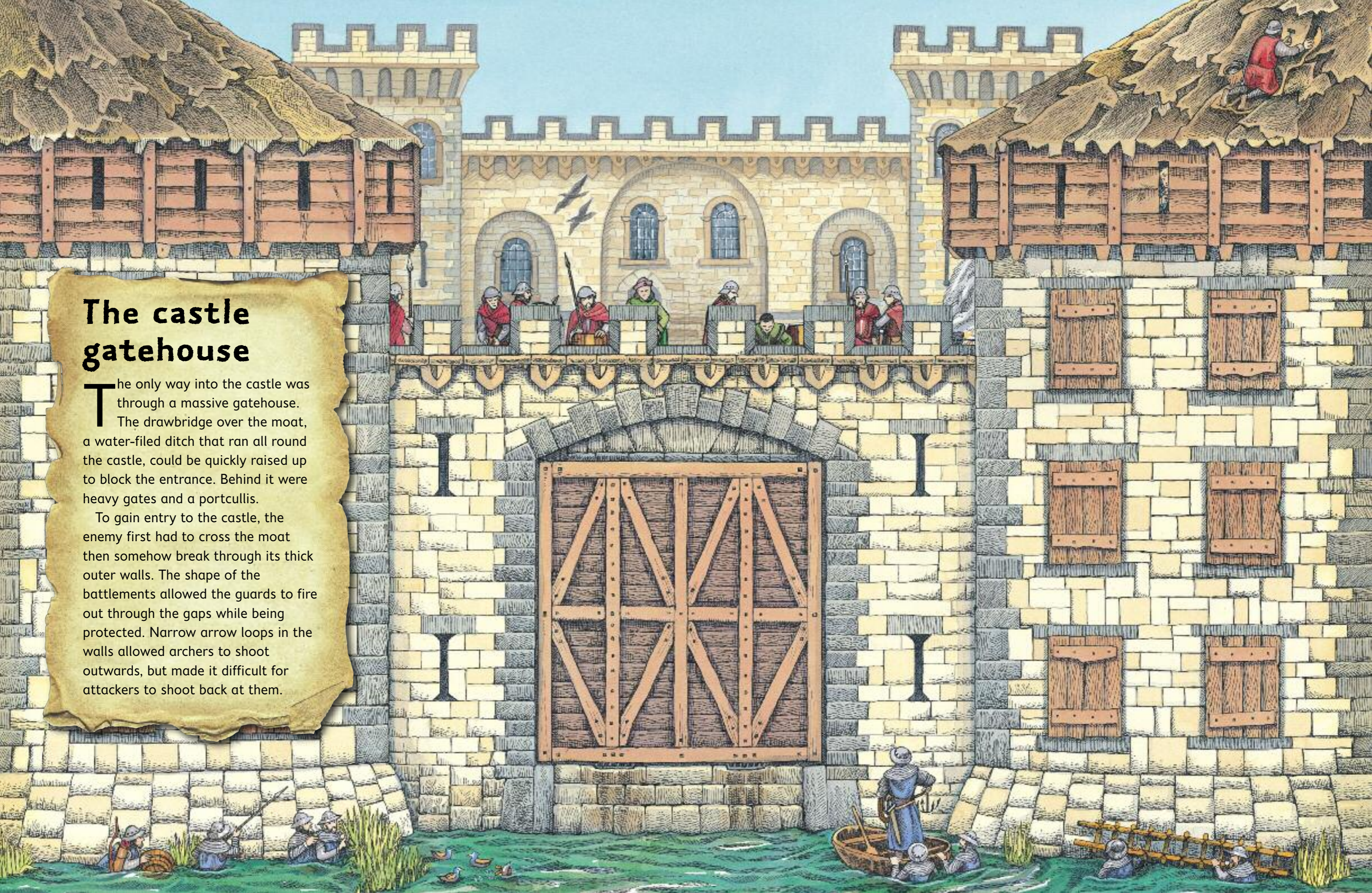
To get to the upper floors of the keep, you had to climb a spiral staircase (*above*). The stone-built steps usually wound to the right as they rose up the tower. This was for a special reason. If enemy soldiers were to break into the keep and start fighting their way up the staircase, the advantage would lie with the defending guards. This was because they had plenty of room to brandish their swords (assuming they were right-handed). Attackers would have had to lean round a corner to use *their* swords.

## The castle gatehouse

The only way into the castle was through a massive gatehouse.

The drawbridge over the moat, a water-filled ditch that ran all round the castle, could be quickly raised up to block the entrance. Behind it were heavy gates and a portcullis.

To gain entry to the castle, the enemy first had to cross the moat then somehow break through its thick outer walls. The shape of the battlements allowed the guards to fire out through the gaps while being protected. Narrow arrow loops in the walls allowed archers to shoot outwards, but made it difficult for attackers to shoot back at them.

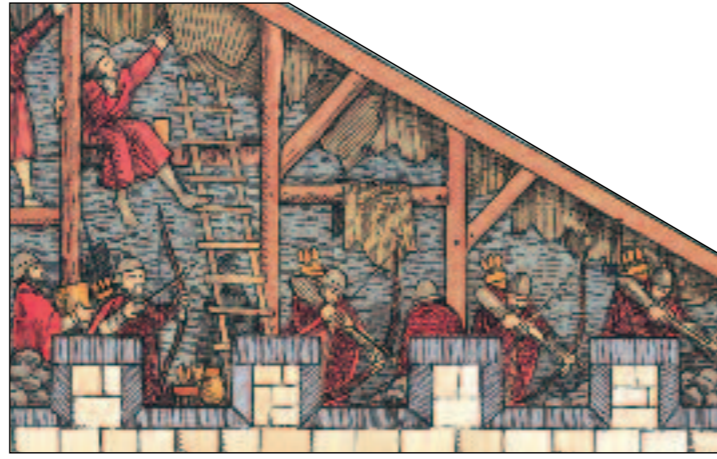




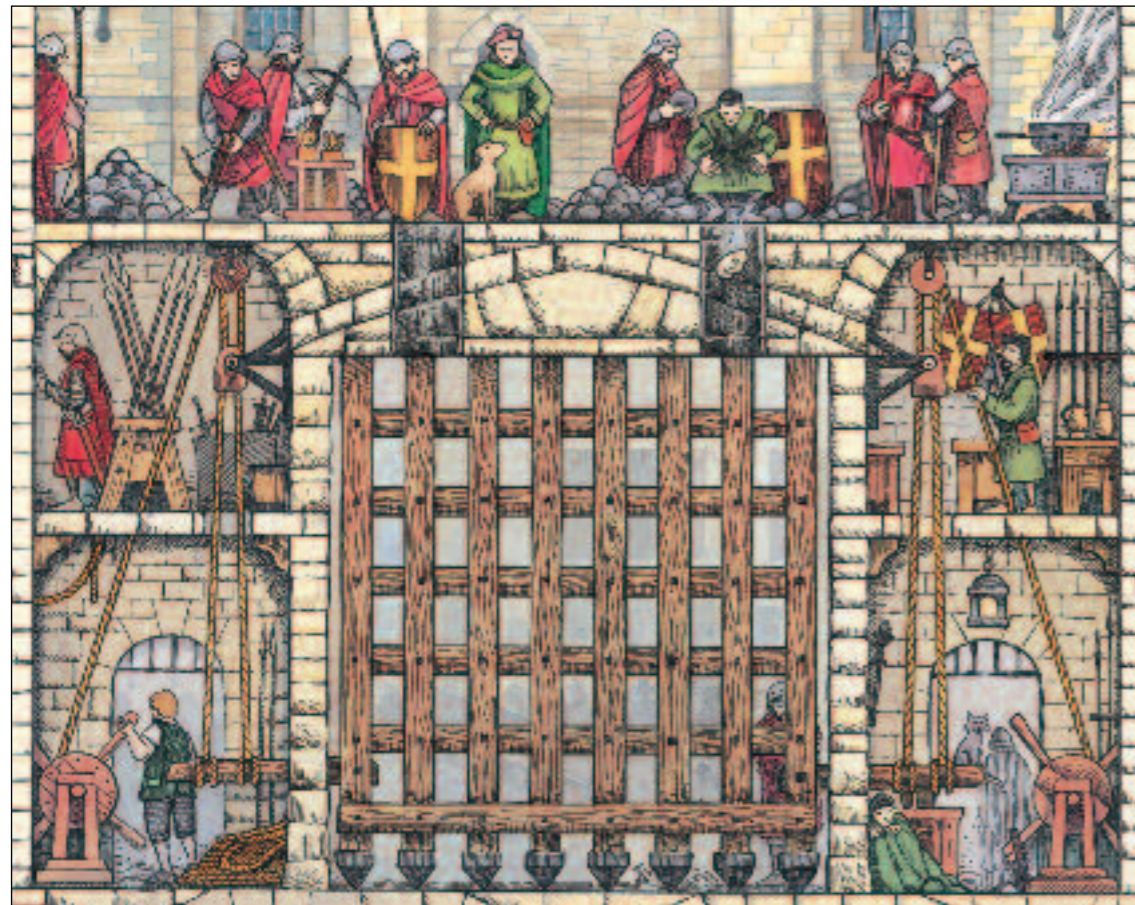


# Defending the castle

If the castle came under threat of attack, carpenters built wooden hoardings around the battlements. This protected the guards from arrows and allowed them to drop rocks on to the attackers below. They stretched damp hides over the hoardings to protect them from fire.



accurate, powerful (the bolt could pierce armour), and could be fired in tight spaces. The only disadvantage was that they took a long time to load.

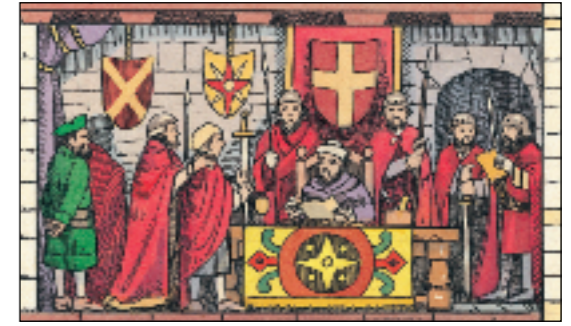


The guards were armed with either a halberd, a long pole with a blade fixed to the end of it, or a bow. For protection, they wore only a simple padded tunic. Bowmen were vital to the defence of the castle. Longbows were as tall as a man and had a good range—200 metres or more. A good longbowman could shoot 12 arrows a minute. Crossbows were an important weapon of defence. They were



Behind the gates there was at least one portcullis. This was a heavy wooden grille that slid down grooves in the stone walls to either side. It was fixed to ropes and was raised or lowered using winding gear inside the gatehouse. Guards could drop stones or hot sand down from above the gateway down through “murder holes” on to the soldiers below.

The castle’s defending garrison included soldiers specially hired to guard the castle. They spent most of their time in the gatehouse and reported to the constable. This was the lord’s second-in-command. He was given the responsibility of controlling the castle when the lord was not at home. His was the most luxurious room in the gatehouse.



The gatehouse also served as the castle prison called the dungeons. The damp, narrow cells were in the basement (above). They had very little light. The unluckiest prisoners were thrown into a small, cramped cell deep inside the dungeons and left to starve. Called an oubliette, it took its name from the French word *oublier*, to forget. More fortunate were the noble prisoners. They were held in relatively comfortable conditions until their family paid a ransom (release fee).



For a castle to survive a siege, a well supplying fresh water inside its walls was essential. Deep shafts, lined with stone, were dug to underground water. The water was raised in wooden buckets using a rope and windlass (above).



Whenever the castle was threatened with attack, the constable went into action. He put the garrison on full alert. He sent messengers to summon more soldiers and he ordered more supplies of food and water. Carpenters were instructed to fix wooden hoardings to the battlements. The commander might also interrogate suspected spies already living in the castle (above).

The castle’s toilets, called garderobes or latrines, were little more than stone seats with holes in them (right). The waste dropped down long shafts to a special pit. The job of clearing out the latrine pit with buckets and spades fell to unfortunate workers known as “gong farmers”.

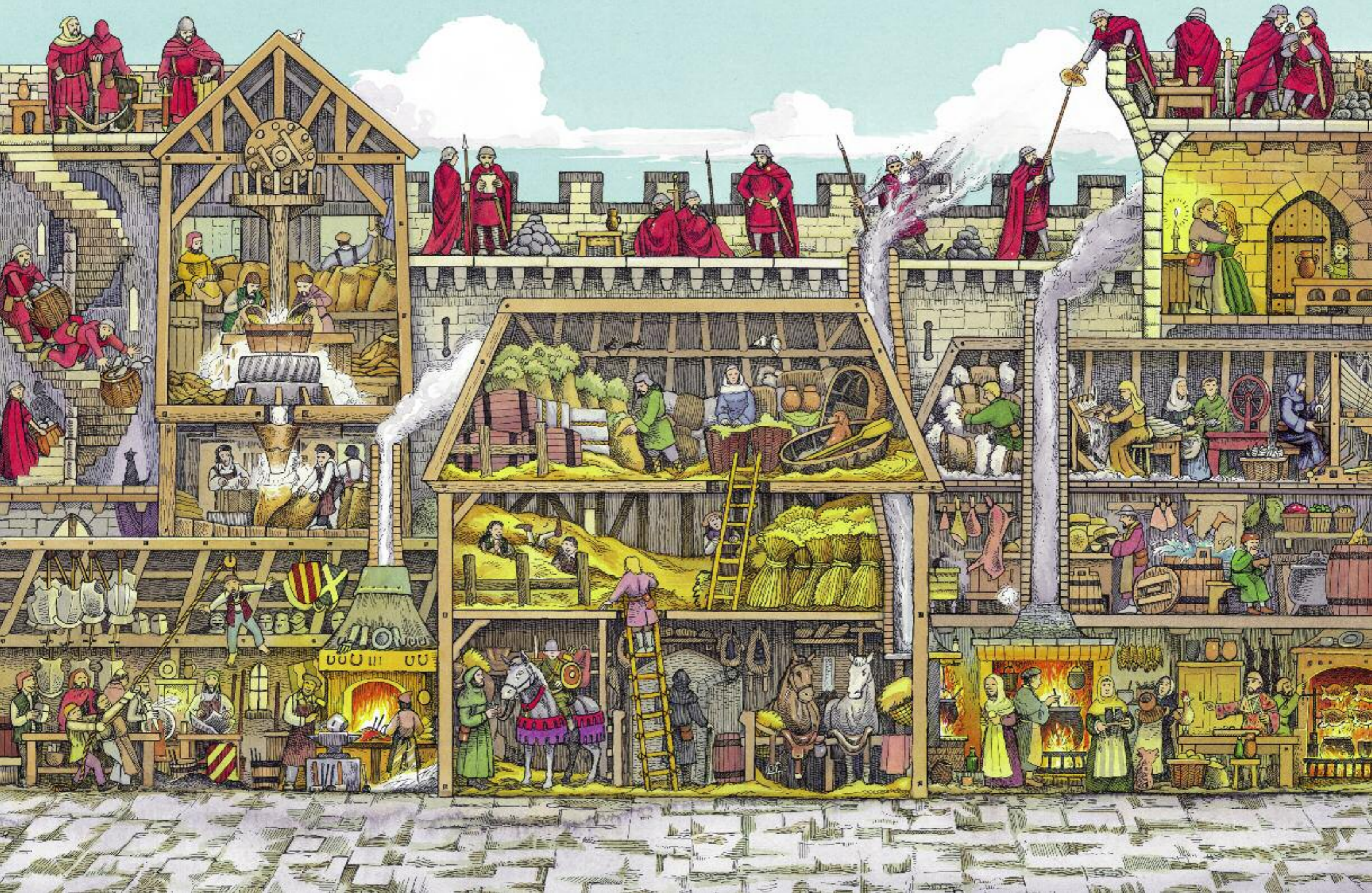




## The bailey

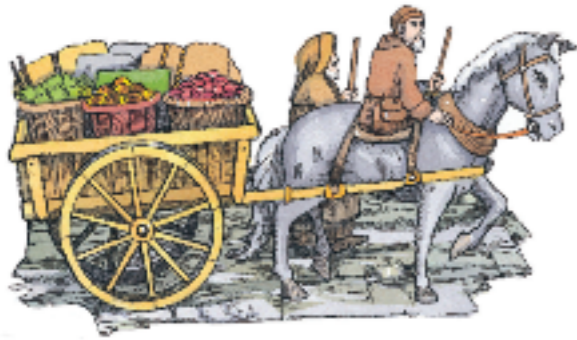
The castle walls enclosed both the keep and one or more courtyards called baileys. Various workshops and other outbuildings were clustered inside the walls. The open spaces of the baileys sheltered villagers and their animals in time of war.

The bailey buildings provided essential goods and services for the castle. The black-smith made or mended all items made of metal. The windmill ground grain into flour to make bread. The stables provided a home for the lord's horses. The kitchens prepared food for the lord and his family, and were especially busy when banquets were held.



# Castle life

The castle was a home for the lord and his family along with his household. Throughout the year, it regularly took in supplies of food, water and fuel. Craftworkers were employed to make or repair everything the residents of the castle required. The lord's household included the constable, the steward, who looked after the finances and supplies, a chaplain, soldiers and a host of servants. Often the numbers were swelled by visitors.



The blacksmith (*below*) made all kinds of vital things out of metal, including nails, chains, tools, hinges and wagon fittings. He also shod all the horses. The brick-built forge contained a fire of burning charcoal. It was kept blazing hot by blasts of air from bellows. Metal was heated on the forge. When it was red hot, the smith hammered it into shape on a heavy iron anvil. To fit a shoe on a horse, the old one was removed, untidy bits of hoof trimmed with a rasp, and the new shoe nailed firmly into place (*right*).



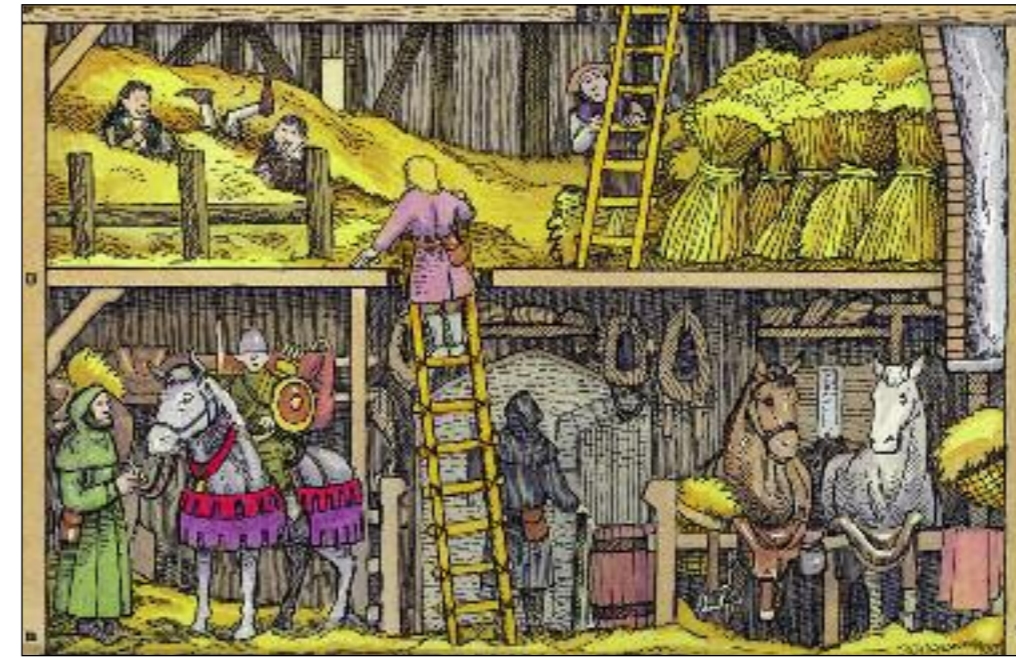
To make bread, grain from cereals, such as wheat or barley, had first to be ground into flour. This job was done by the windmill. Built high on the walls, its sails, called sweeps, caught the wind. The rotating sweeps drove a mechanism inside which turned heavy grinding stones. The ground flour dropped through to sacks in the area beneath. The sweeps were angled in such a way that they always turned anticlockwise when the wind blew.



The food for the castle came from the manor, the land owned by the lord. The local people were allowed to farm some of it for themselves, in return for cultivating the lord's land. In the winter, food for the livestock was in short supply, so most of the animals were slaughtered. The meat was smoked or salted so that it would be preserved, then hung or stored in barrels in storerooms.



Sheep (*right*) also supplied wool for the seamstresses to make clothes. Creamy milk from cows was made into soft cheese or butter (*below right*).



Horses were the lord's most valuable possessions. They were well looked after in the stables by the sergeant-farrier and his stable lads (*left*). There were different horses for different purposes: riding into battle, pulling carts or carrying loads, getting about, and hunting.



The women of the castle (*left*) made, mended and cleaned clothes. They used spinning wheels to spin yarn. The operator, called a spinster, pressed the treadle with her foot, which rotated the wheel that turned a spindle, winding the woollen threads around it.

The kitchens (*right*) were busiest when the lord was at home. Meat was roasted on a spit that had to be turned by hand. This was the job of the turnspit. Stews, soups and sauces were boiled in a large cauldron over an open fire.



# The joust

A favourite sport in the Middle Ages was a mock battle, called a tournament. The jousting tournament was the most exciting contest. Knights charged at each other on horseback, aiming to knock their opponent off his horse using a wooden lance. Apart from unhorsing the other knight, victory could be won by striking the opponent's shield with his lance. Although jousting armour was reinforced and horses were protected by straw padding—injuries or death were common.

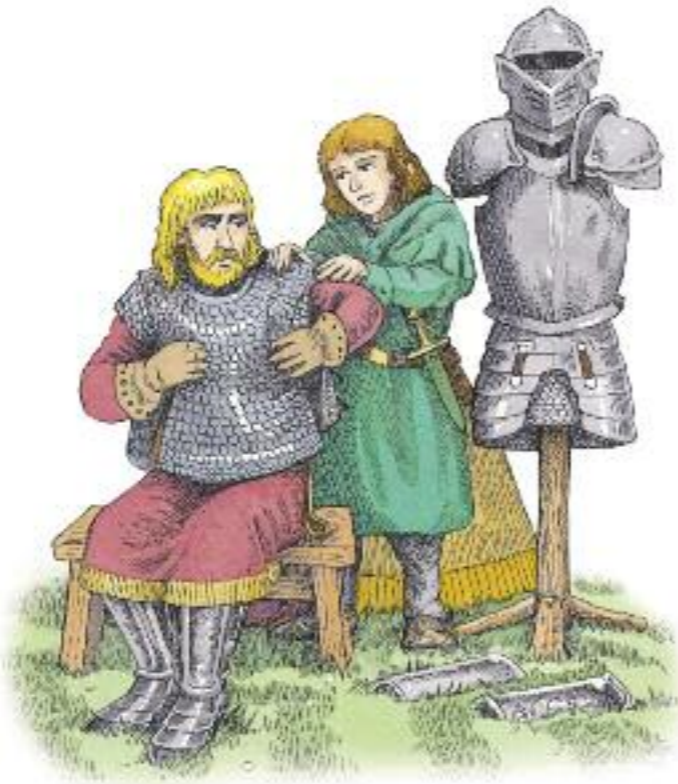




# Knights in armour

In the Middle Ages, the king ruled the country—but only with the help of powerful lords. They were allowed by the king to own large tracts of land and build castles in return for a promise of support to fight for him in war. A lord could not control all his lands without help, so he gave some of it to wealthy knights in return for a promise to fight for him when the need arose. Also under the lord's control were the people who lived on and farmed the land. They were protected by the lord in return for taxes. This arrangement was known as feudalism.

Knights were warriors who fought on horseback. They lived by a code of chivalry: they were expected to be honourable and brave and protect the weak.



Getting ready for a joust could take a knight a long time. He needed help from his assistant, called a squire, to dress him. First on were padded undergarments, including a thick linen undershirt called a doublet, to protect his skin from bruises and rubbing. On top of that the knight wore a coat of mail called a hauberk (above). This was made of hundreds of metal rings linked together.

Over the mail, the knight wore a suit of plate armour (above). Wealthy knights had armour specially made by an armourer to fit them. Each piece was cut and shaped to the right size, then jointed together with metal rivets or leather straps. Although the suit of armour was very heavy, it was quite flexible and allowed the knight to move around easily. The knight's helmet (right) was called a basinet. Covering his face was a visor, which could be tipped upwards to open. Small holes let in air for ventilation. The wearer looked out through an eye slit.



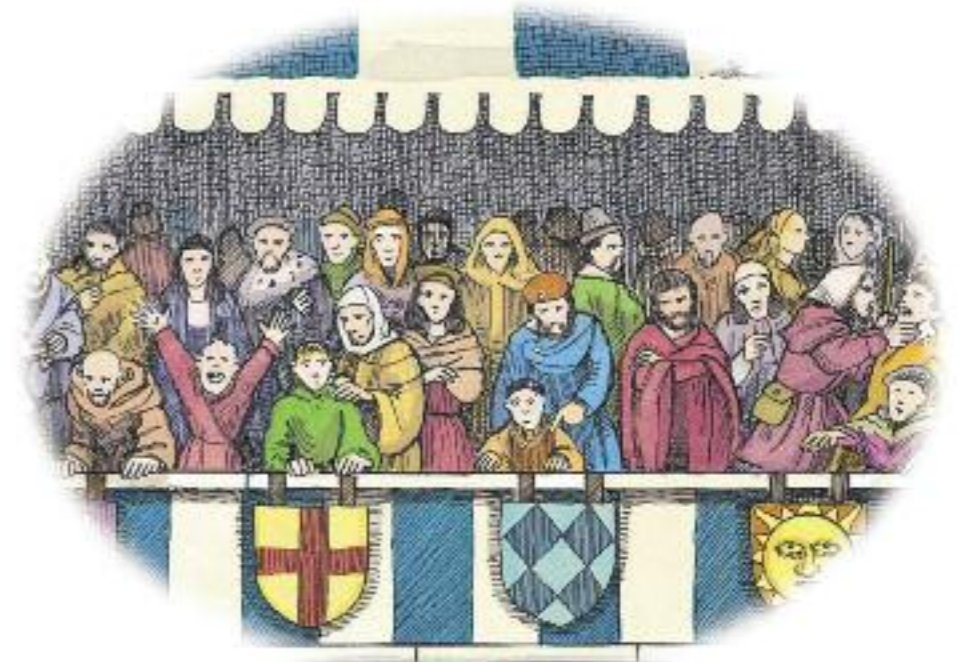
Clad in armour, all the knights looked the same. So, to ensure they were not attacked by their own men, or so that they could be easily identified at a tournament, the knights decorated their shield, armour—and sometimes even their horse—with the distinctive design of their own noble family, called arms. The surcoat a knight wore over his armour became known as his coat of arms. The design was contained within the

shape of a shield. When noble men and women married, their arms were merged by dividing the shield in two. When their children married it was divided again into quarters. Heralds were responsible for setting the complicated rules for the creation of arms, and they kept track of them in books called armorials. The rules and records became known as heraldry. Heralds also organized tournaments and acted as messengers on the battlefield.



At the command of the herald, the joust began. Both knights, at a distance of about 300 paces apart, charged towards each other, urging their horses forward by pricking their sides with the spurs on their heels.

Knights who accepted the invitation to the jousting contest stayed at local inns or camped in the fields outside the castle. Each knight prepared himself in his arming tent, adorned by his coat of arms, with the help of his squire. Before the tournament began, the knights paraded before the cheering crowds. Tournaments like this were displays of chivalry—and an opportunity for a knight to impress a lady! She would tie a silk scarf round the arm of a favoured knight



# Glossary

**Arrow loop** An opening in a castle wall through which arrows were shot.

**Bailey** An open area enclosed by castle walls.

**Baron** A wealthy nobleman who promised to be loyal to the king in exchange for lands.

**Battlements** The top of a wall with a series of gaps, called crenelles, between raised portions, called merlons: also known as crenellations.

**Blacksmith** A person who makes or shapes iron objects, using heat to melt or soften the metal.

**Chivalry** The rules of polite and honourable behaviour that **knights** were meant to follow.



**Crossbow** A mechanical bow using short bolts instead of arrows.

**Curtain wall** The outer wall of the castle.

**Drawbridge** A wooden bridge across a ditch or **moat** that could be raised or lowered.

**Dungeon** A prison cell in the castle basement.

**Feudalism** The arrangement by which land was granted in return for service or loyalty.

**Garrison** The soldiers stationed at a castle.

**Gatehouse** A heavily fortified castle entrance.

**Herald** The designer of a **coat of arms**. He also acted as an official at **tournaments** and battles.

**Hoardings** A wooden gallery built on top of the walls with holes in the floor, through which guards could attack the enemy.

**Joust** A contest in which one **knight** tries to knock the other off his horse with a **lance**.



**Coat of arms** The emblem of a noble family.

**Constable** The commander of the **garrison**, who looked after the castle while the **lord** was away. He was also known as the castellan.

**Keep** The main tower inside the castle walls.

**Knight** A mounted soldier who served a **lord** and followed a code of **chivalry**. He was expected to be honourable and brave.

**Lance** A long, pointed pole used as a weapon in **jousts** and battles.

**Lord** The chief resident of a castle. One of the most powerful men in the country.

**Mail** Flexible armour made up from interlocking metal rings.

**Mangonel** A large catapult that fired rocks and missiles at a castle during a **siege**.

**Moat** A water-filled ditch surrounding a castle.

**Murder hole**

A hole in the floor above the castle entrance, through which defenders could fire or drop missiles on the enemy below

**Oubliette** A small cell inside the **dungeons**.

**Portcullis** A heavy wooden grille that could be slid down to close the castle entrance.

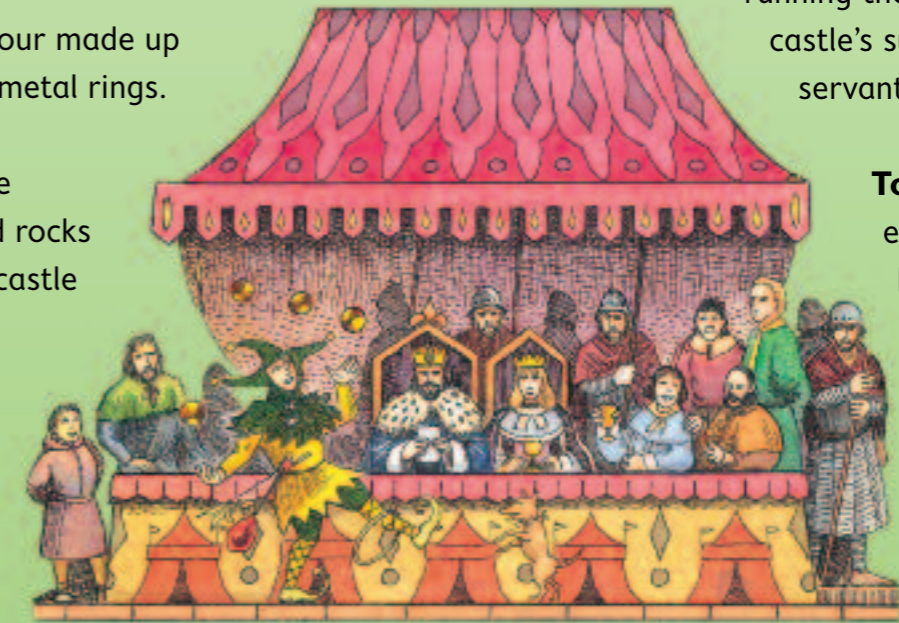
**Siege** The surrounding of a castle by the enemy army, to prevent any supplies from getting in and any people getting out.

**Spur** A sharp point fitted to a rider's heel, used to make a horse gallop faster.

**Squire** A young trainee **knight** who worked as a personal assistant to an older knight.

**Steward** An official in charge of running the castle's supplies, servants and finances.

**Tournament** An event in which **knights** showed off their skills at **jousts**, melees and other mock battles



**Trebuchet** A giant catapult that hurled missiles such as rocks, dead animals or even human heads into a castle during an attack. It was powered by using heavy weights.





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