

BRIEF HISTORY OF CONWY

Llewellyn ap Iorwerth or Llewellyn the Great (1173-1240) founded an abbey at Conwy and he was later buried there.

However the town of Conwy was founded by the English king Edward I. After subduing Wales Edward decided to build a chain of castles in Wales to hold down the Welsh. In 1283 he visited Conwy and decided to build a castle and a new town there.

Edward moved the monks to Maenan to make way for his new town but he kept the Abbey Church.

An architect called James of St George was employed to build Conwy castle and the town walls. It took 4 years to build Conwy Castle, from 1283 to 1287 and it took 15,000 men to build it. Conwy Castle was protected by 8 towers.

Conwy Castle was besieged by the Welsh in 1295. When Owain Glyndwr led a rebellion in 1403 the rebels captured Conwy Castle by trickery.

Meanwhile walls were erected around the new town. They were 30 feet high and several feet thick. The walls were strengthened by 21 towers. There were 3 gates in the walls.

In later centuries Conwy castle fell derelict and it was sold to Lord Conwy in 1627. However when civil war came in 1642 the castle was repaired and garrisoned. In August 1646 the parliamentary army laid siege to Conwy Castle but they did not capture it for 3 months. Afterwards Conwy Castle was 'sighted' (deliberately damaged) to prevent the royalists ever using it again.

A fine town house Plas Mawr was built in 1576. Conwy also has the smallest house in Britain. It is only 10 feet high and has a frontage of only 6 feet. Conwy also has one of the oldest houses in Wales, Aberconwy on the junction of High Street and Castle Street.

In the early 18th century Daniel Defoe visited Conwy and he called the harbour a 'noble harbour, which infinitely outdoes Chester or Liverpool itself'. The quay was built in 1833 and during the 19th century it was used to export slate. It was also used by fishermen.

Until the 19th century there was no bridge to Conwy and you had to use a ferry to cross the River Conwy. However in 1826 a suspension bridge designed by Thomas Telford was opened. In 1849 Robert Stephenson built a railway bridge over the river. A new road bridge was built in 1958. Conwy Road Tunnel was built in 1986-1991. It was the first immersed tube tunnel to be built in the UK. Using this method a trench is dredged then elements of precast reinforced concrete are floated into position and sunk then joined together. The Conwy Road Tunnel is 710 metres long.

Today Conwy is a charming little town. Today the population of Conwy is 3,900.