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LOOKING AT CASTLES: DURABILITY AND CHANGE IN THE PERCEPTION OF THE CASTLE

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Abstract: This paper analyses a few aspects of the impact castles had on an area. Durability as both strength and permanence seems to have been the image projected by castles on their contemporaries. As would be expected this perception changed with time. Although the durability of most castles is clear, their use has changed continuously, some turning from impregnable fortresses to luxurious residences, others becoming prisons after being royal administrative centres. Most of them are ruins, but they have acquired a new dimension by becoming touristic attractions, proving thus that the essence of castles' durability resides in their ability to change. The best way to explain the transformation is to discuss one castle in particular. I have chosen Kenilworth Castle as an example of a durable castle, which was a powerful royal stronghold and an impressive residence during the Middle Ages and Renaissance and which was deliberately slighted after the civil war in an attempt to undermine the image of lordship and suzerainty.