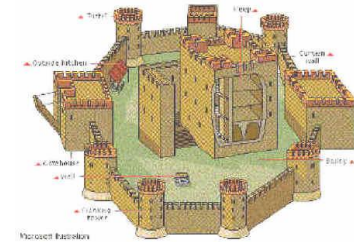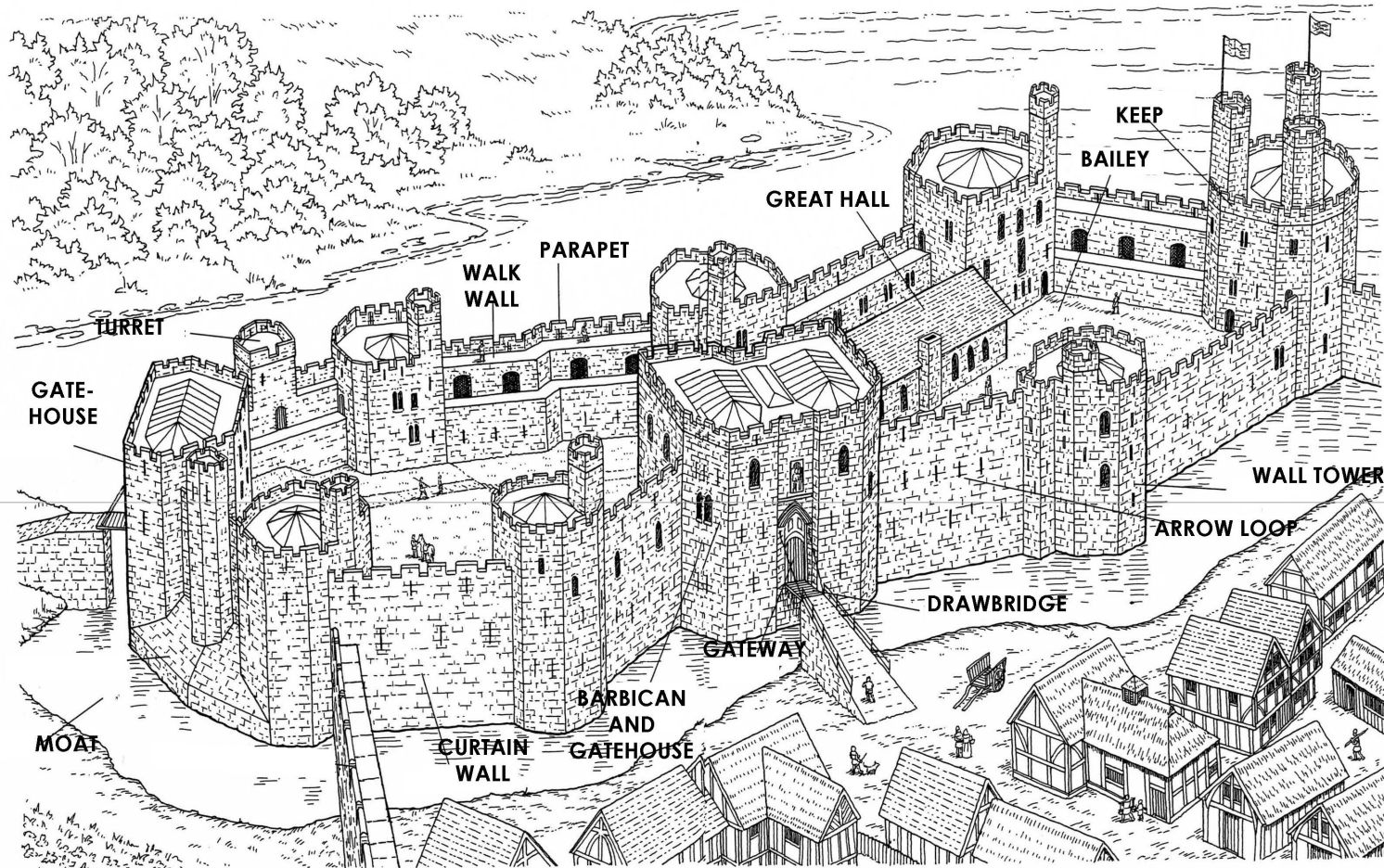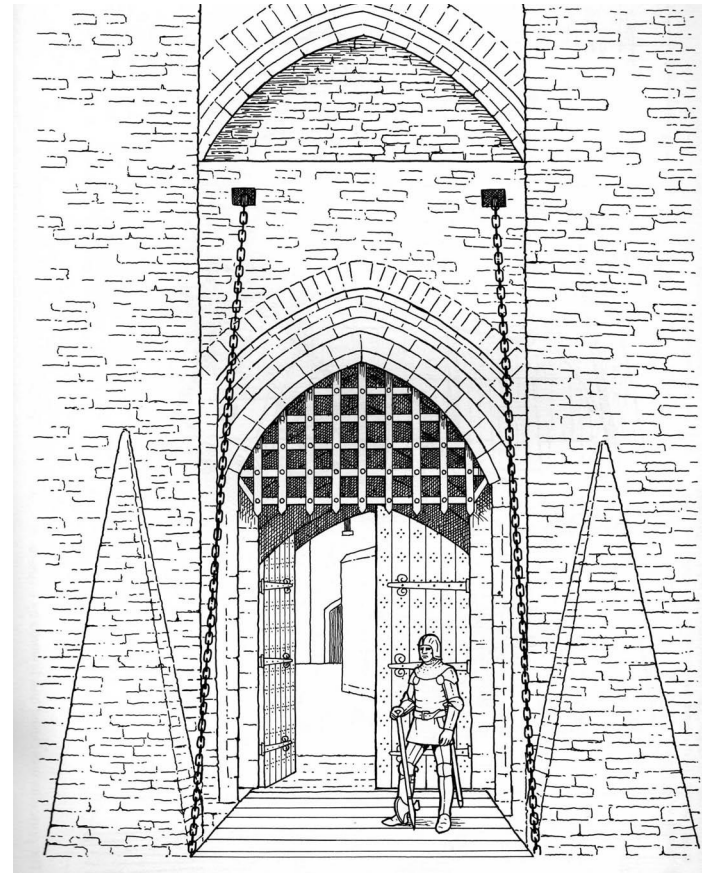# Attacking and Defending a castle
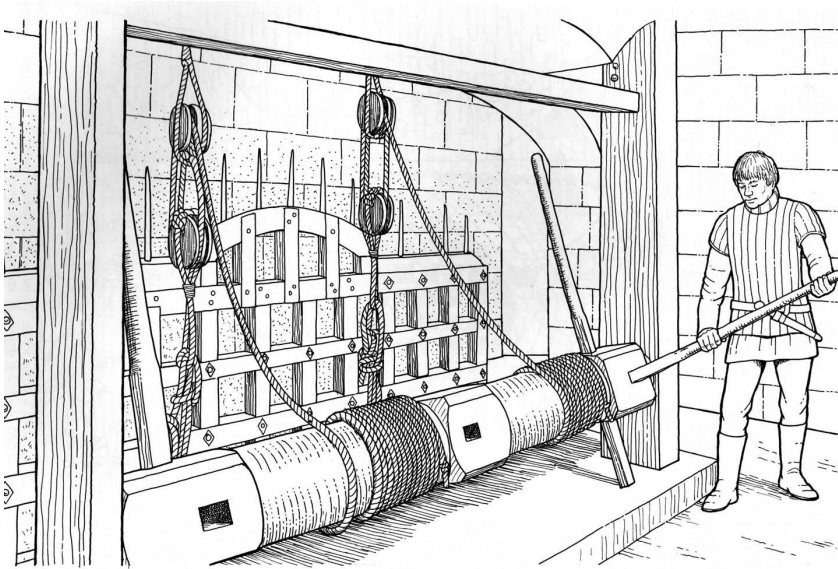
Medieval life

PARTS OF A CASTLE

DEFENSIVE FEATURES

- Entrance to the castle was by means of a **gatehouse**, which was often part of a large tower called the **barbican.** Visitors had to cross a drawbridge over a water-filled moat.

- The **drawbridge** could be raised or lowered, as could the portcullis, a heavy iron gate designed to allow entrance or to keep invaders out.
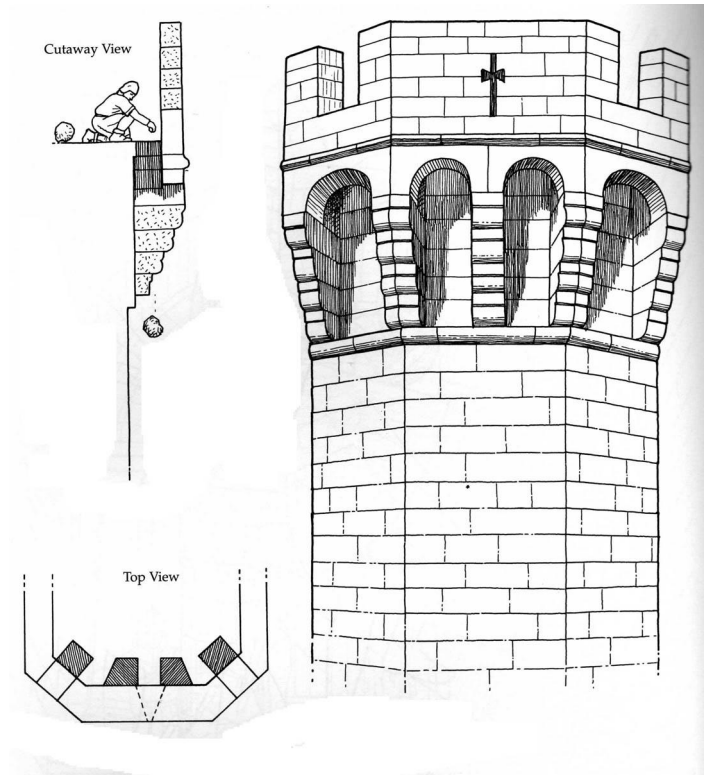
DEFENSIVE FEATURES

The **portcullis** was raised and lowered by a system of winches and ropes or chains housed in a room above the gatehouse.
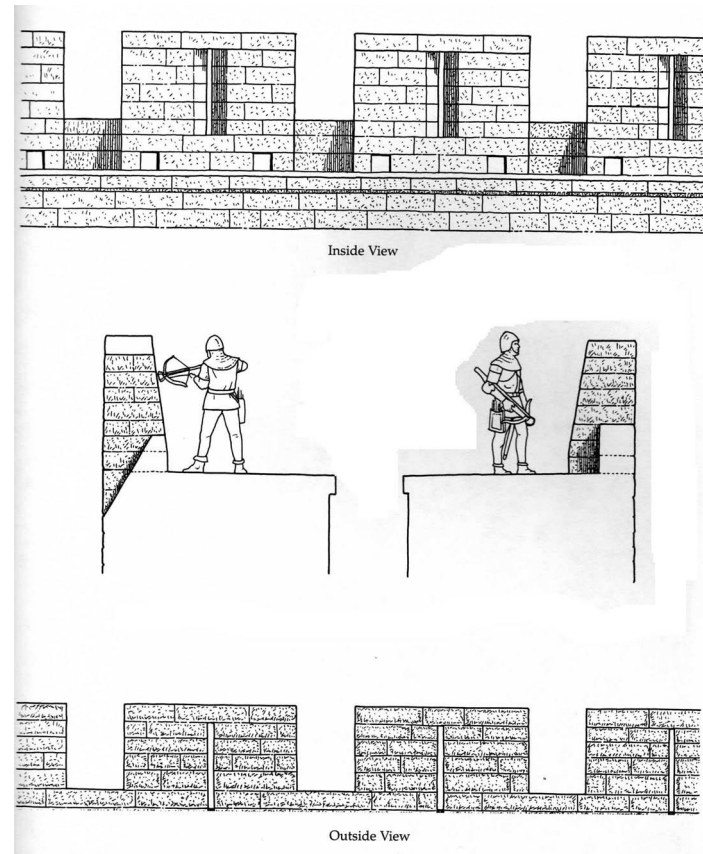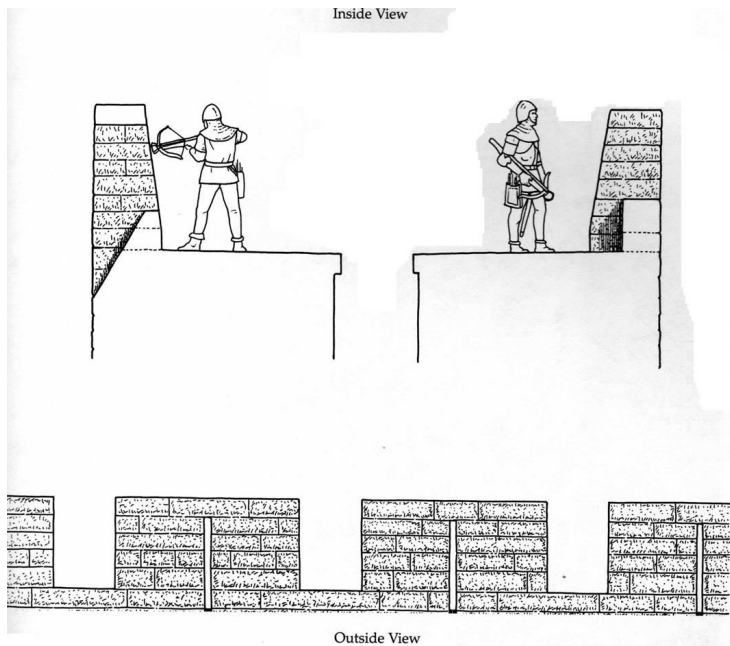
DEFENSIVE FEATURES

A MACHICOLATED TOWER

- **Machicolations** were openings formed in the roofs of gateways and entrance passages through which defenders, protected by stone walls, could hurl stones, boiling pitch, darts and other missiles on the assailants below.
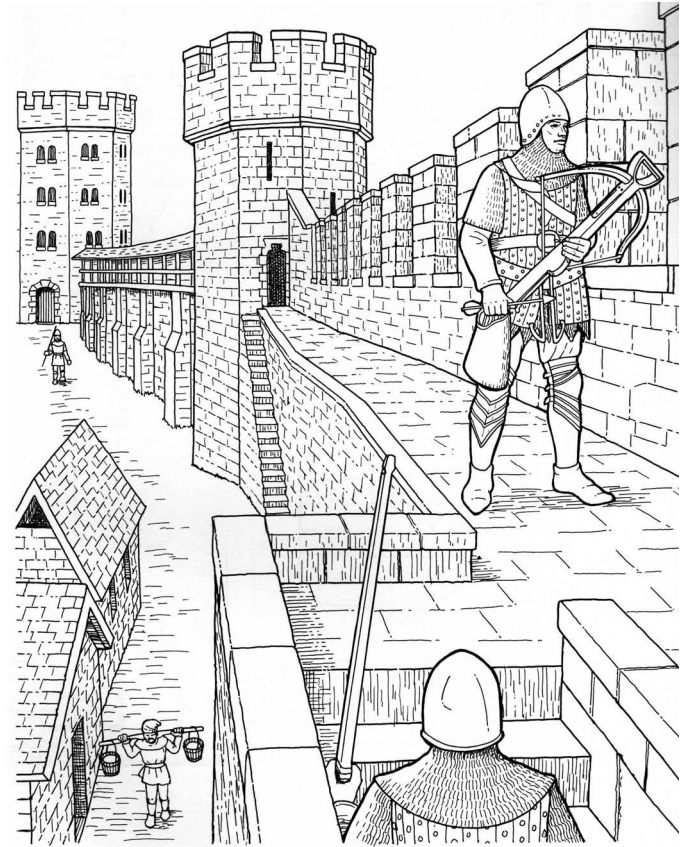
DEFENSIVE FEATURES:
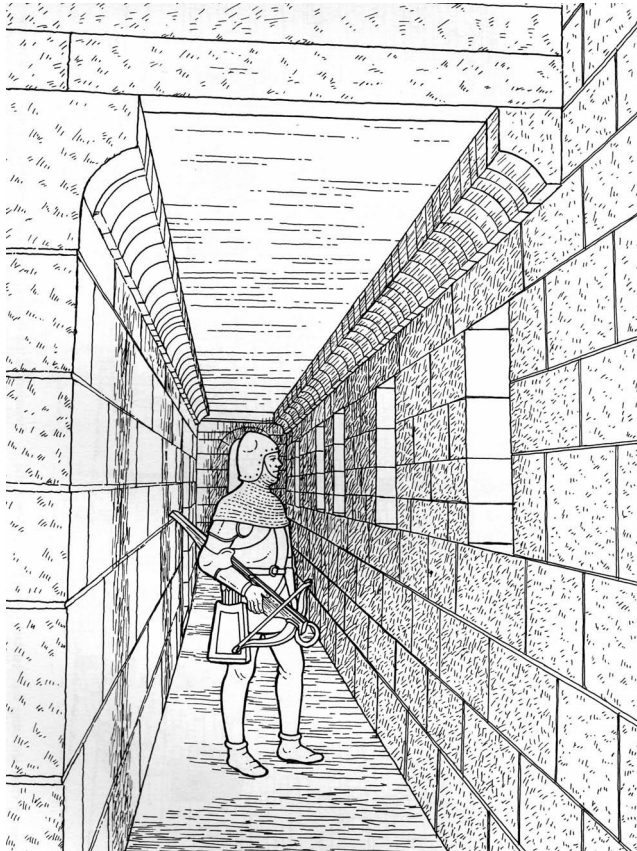# INTERIOR AND EXTERIOR VIEWS OF CASTLE WALL

Inside View

Outside View

DEFENSIVE FEATURES

CROSSBOWMAN AND LONGBOWMAN

- A **crossbowman** on the wall walks keeps a sharp eye out for approaching enemies, while a **longbowman** mounts the steps. The crossbow was a formidable weapon with far greater power and range then the longbow.

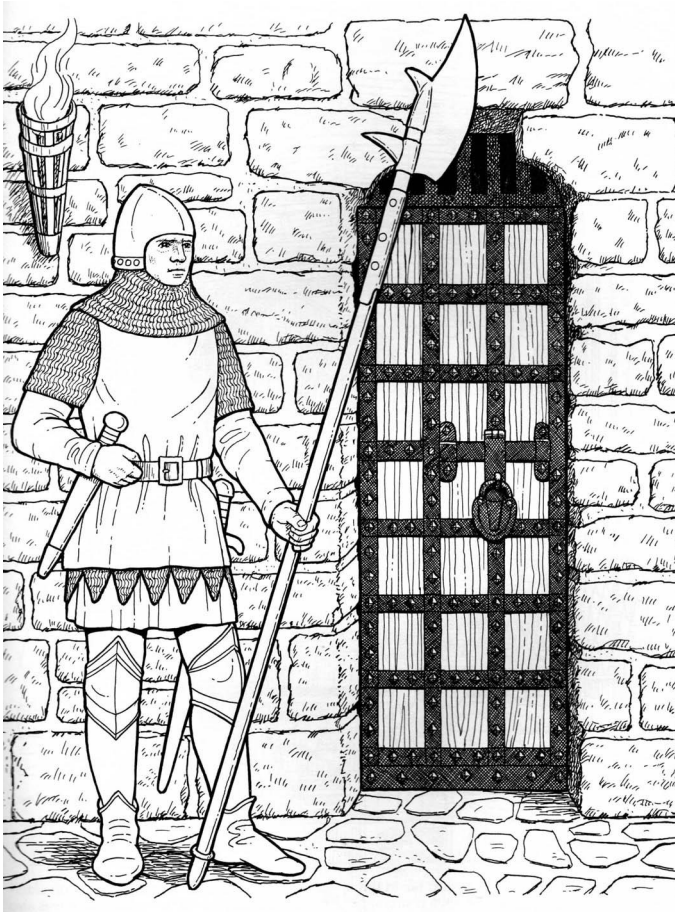- But a trained longbowman could get off 4 or 5 shots and the crossbowman only one.
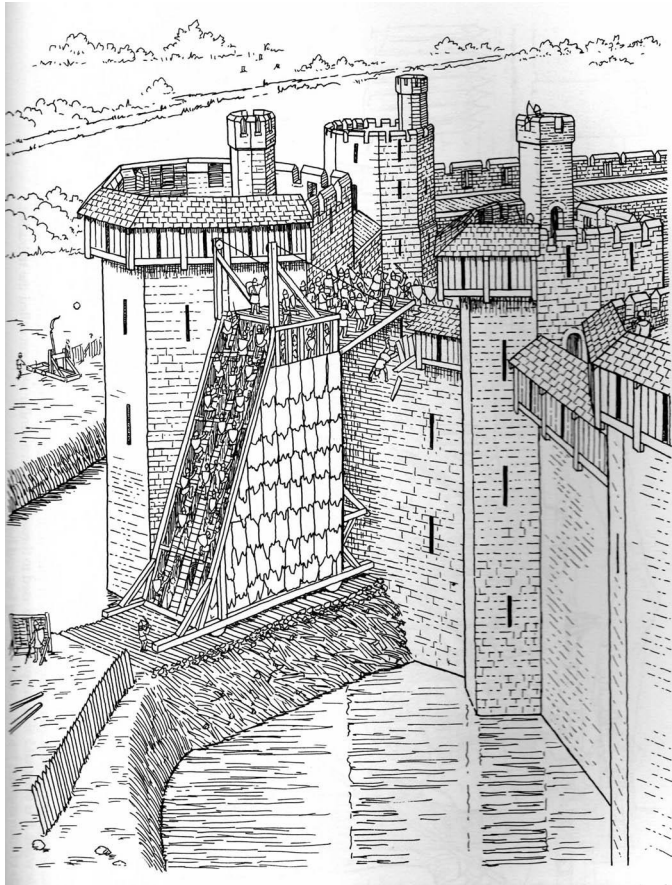
DEFENSIVE FEATURES

- A **crossbowman** stands guard in the interior of a curtain wall.

- Arrows slits in the wall allowed the bowman to fire his weapon without exposing himself to enemy fire.
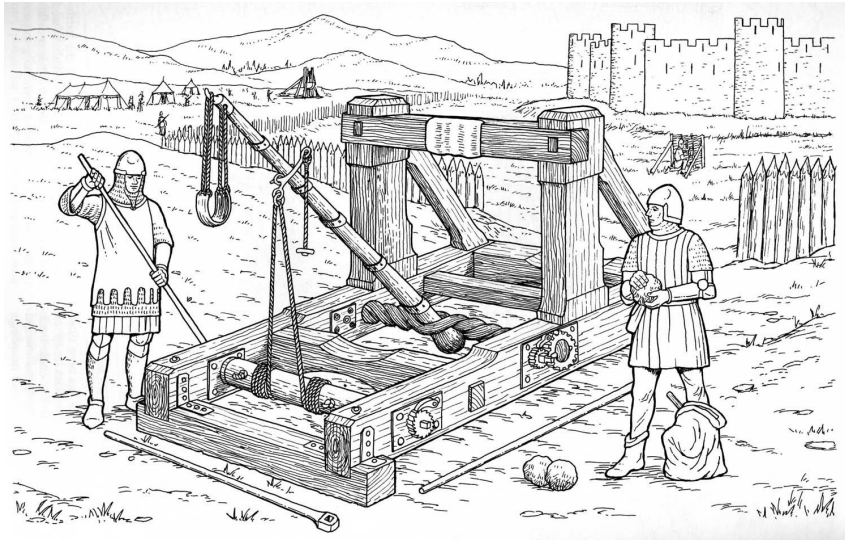
DEFENSIVE FEATURES

- A **guard** stands watch outside a fortified door.

- The most secure rooms in the castle – dungeons, the treasury, the wine cellar – were protected by heavy wooden doors bound in iron.

WAYS TO ATTACK CASTLES

- THE SIEGE TOWER

- The moat has been filled with logs and earth to enable the attackers to roll a movable siege tower close the castle wall.
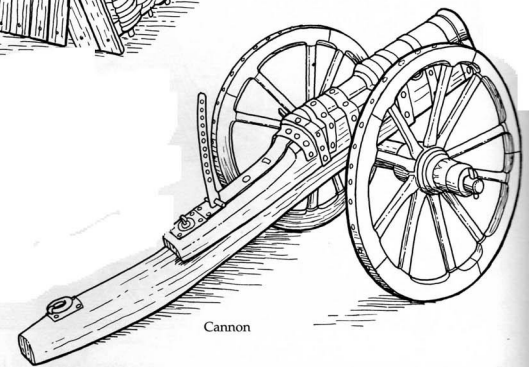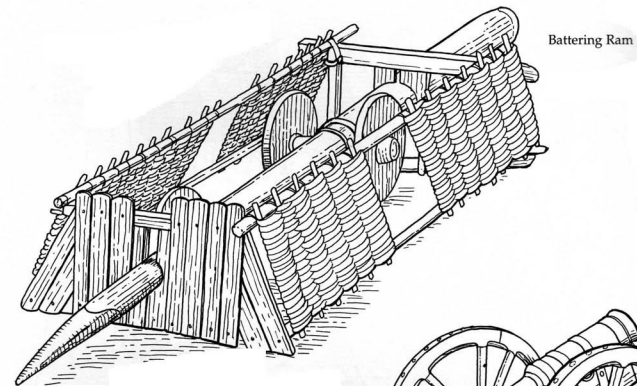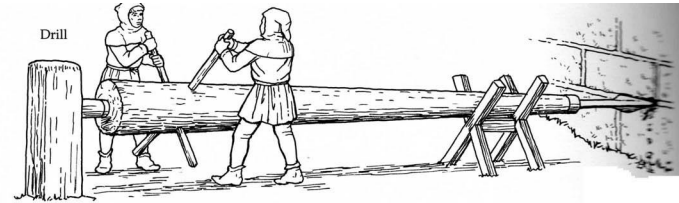
WAYS TO ATTACK CASTLES

- **Catapults** were able to cast stones or flaming balls of pitch over the castles walls.
- It is even said that catapults were used to throw the heads of slains enemies into castle, instilling fear and horror in the occupants. A catapult was smaller and less powerful than a the trebuchet.
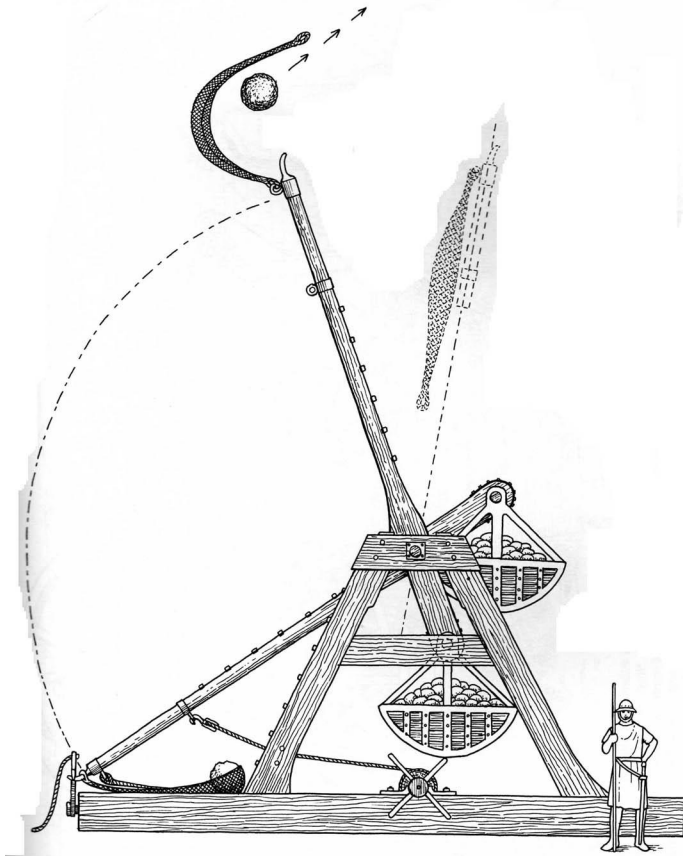
WAYS TO ATTACK CASTLES

OTHER SIEGE WEAPONS

- A huge **drill**, used to pry apart the seams of the castle walls.

- The **battering ram** was for ramming into doors and gates to smash holes for soldiers to get through. The very first battering rams were just logs. After, they were put on wheels and covered over to Project the soldiers.

- The **cannon**. The introduction of the cannons and the gunpowder c. 1400, and their ability to reduce the castle wall to rubble, spelled the end of the stone castles as a defensive fortress.

Drill

Battering Ram

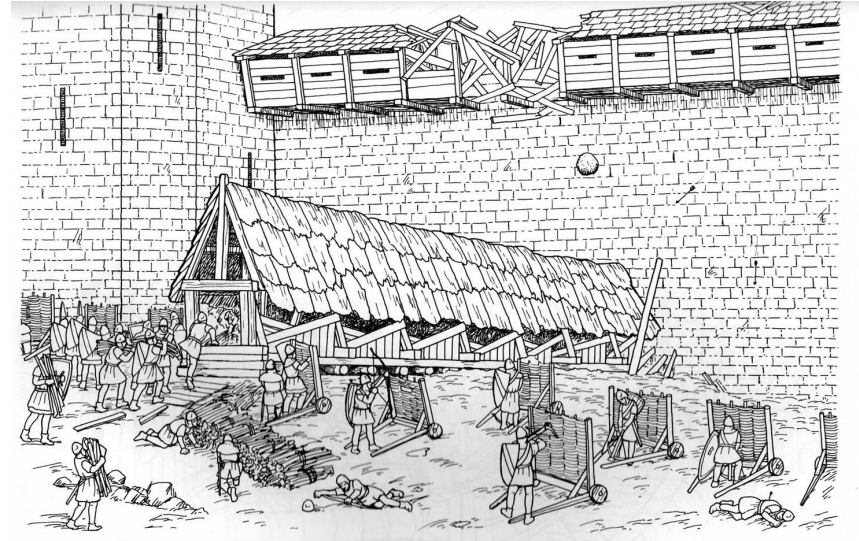
Cannon

WAYS TO ATTACK CASTLES

- **The trebuchet**
- The trebuchet was a large siege engine capable of throwing huge stones (up to 400 lbs) and other missiles.
- More accurate than the catapult, the trebuchet could pound away at a particular spot in the castle wall until the wall crumble. Early versions were powered by human muscle, but later models employed a large counterweight to propel the arm forward.

WAYS TO ATTACK CASTLES

The penthouse or cat

- The castle will being attacked under cover of a **penthouse** or cat, a long one-story structure built of scout timbers and covered with raw hides.

- **Miners** would dig out a large chamber underneath the castle wall.

From

- A.G. Smith, The MEDIEVAL CASTLE, Dover Publications, INC; New York