



Figure 2.3 This map shows the location of the most important castles built during William's reign.

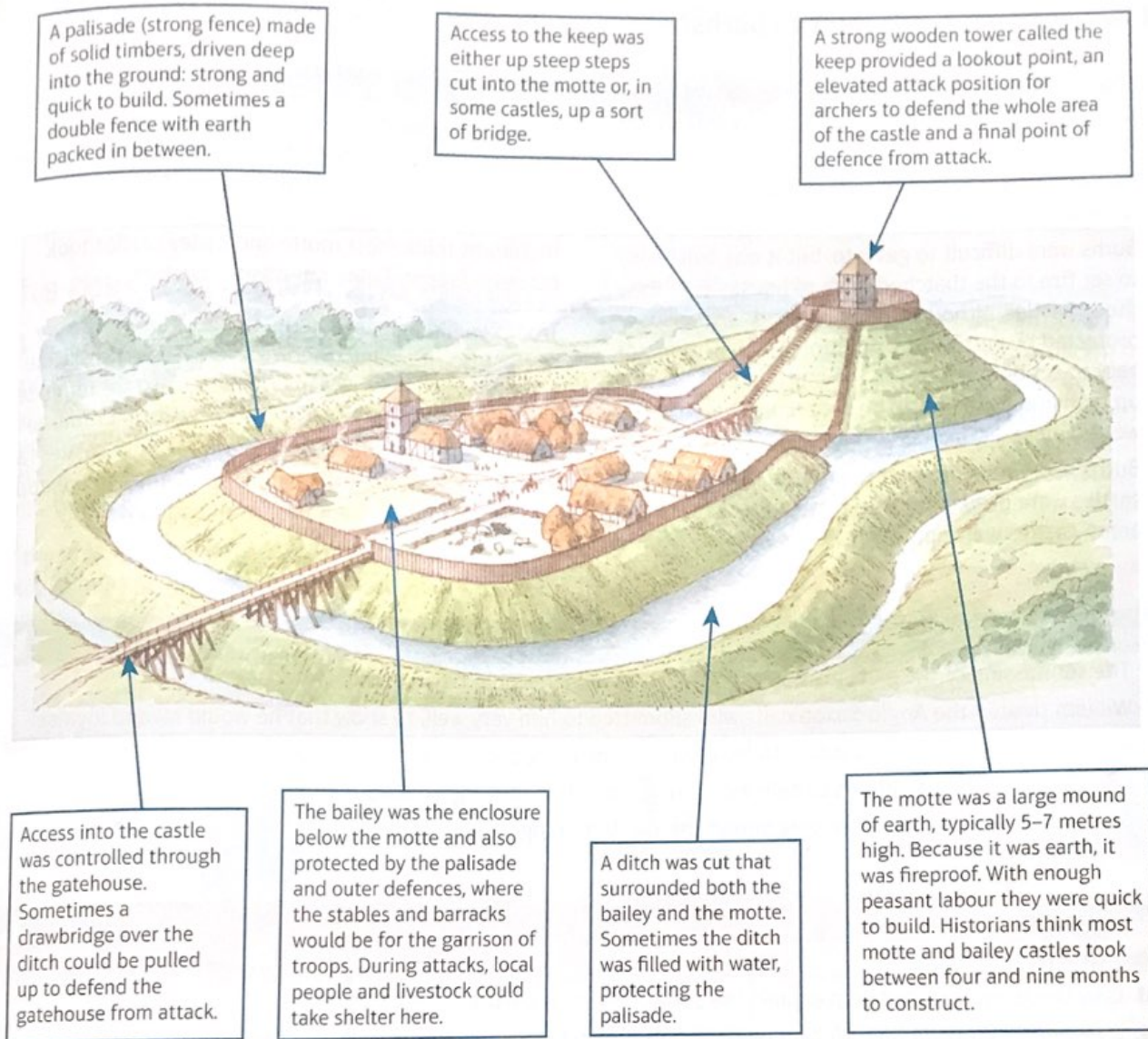


Figure 2.4 Motte and bailey castles were very difficult to attack.

Why were castles important?

- They were built in **strategic locations** – for example, at river crossings or near passes through mountains or hills. The Marcher earls built castles all along the border with Wales, as shown in Figure 2.3.
- They were used as a **base** by the lord of the area. The Marcher earls, for example, launched invasions into Wales from castles like Chepstow in South Wales. If troops were beaten back, they could take refuge in the castle and then launch a counter-attack.
- They were used to **dominate territory** newly brought under Norman control. These castles were often built in towns. Exeter, Warwick, Nottingham and York castles were all built as part of campaigns against unrest in the area.
- They were a **symbol of Norman power**: everyone in the area would see the castle towering over them and would constantly be reminded of who ruled them.