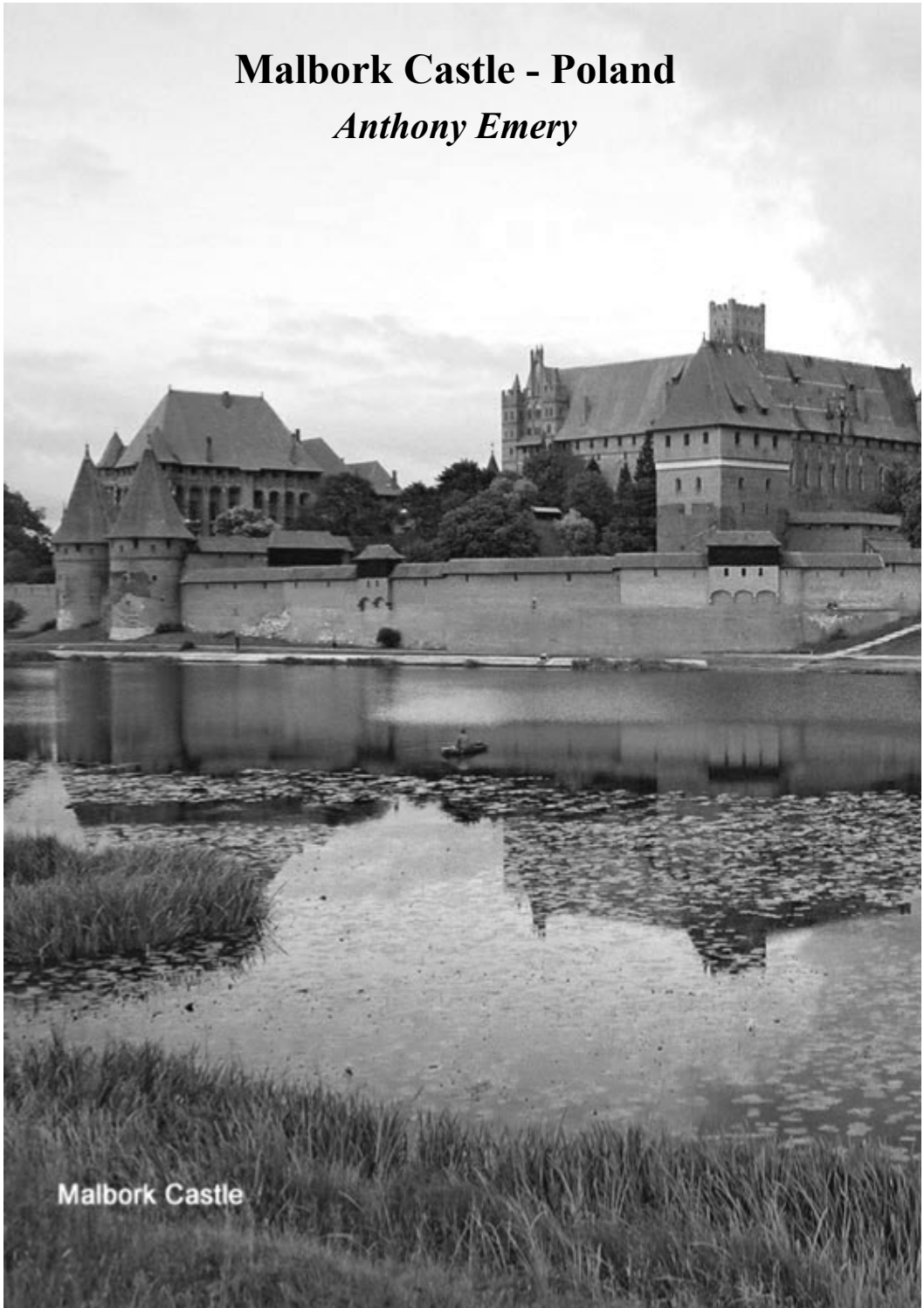
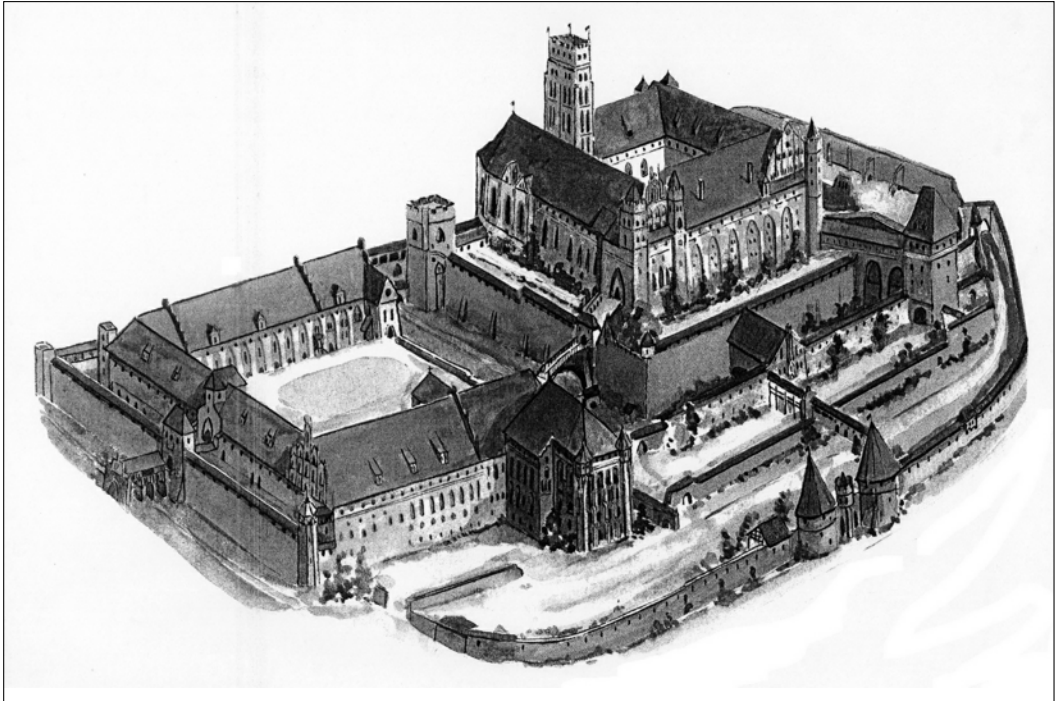


# Malbork Castle - Poland

*Anthony Emery*



Malbork Castle



*Fig. 1. Bird's eye view of Malbork Castle, showing the Upper Castle (right) and the Middle Castle (left) with the Grand Master's Palace projecting towards the turreted Bridge Gate.*

## THE GRAND MASTER'S PALACE - MALBORK CASTLE

*Anthony Emery*

Malbork Castle in Poland has been described as 'the greatest work of medieval secular architecture in Europe that has come down to us astonishingly complete' (1). As a palace-fortress, it compares in scale and completeness with the royal structures at Windsor, Vincennes, Perpignan, and Seville, the papal palace at Avignon, and the princely chateaux at Pierrefonds, Saumur, and Durham. Furthermore, the Grand Master's residence within Malbork Castle can be compared with the ducal palaces at Gubbio, Mantua, and Urbino and the episcopal palaces at Wells and Narbonne. Much of the original structure survives at Malbork to testify to the high standards and outstanding quality of the workmanship practiced in the region throughout the fourteenth

century. But the castle also demonstrates the meeting of secular and religious architecture in a concept and with a vocabulary that can be rarely matched so vividly in medieval Europe.

### Introduction

Malbork Castle stands on the low-lying right bank of the river Nogat not far from its delta with the Baltic Sea, 25 miles away. It was the epicentre of the Order of Teutonic Knights who developed it in stages between about 1276 and 1406 so that it became the largest brick castle in the world. Despite centuries of military occupation and partial destruction in 1945, the fortress stands once more relatively complete - roofed, windowed, and floored - as one of the most impressive monuments of the medieval world.

Covering an elongated site of 52 acres, the fortress was protected on the north and west by the river Nogat and by marshlands on the

## Malbork Castle

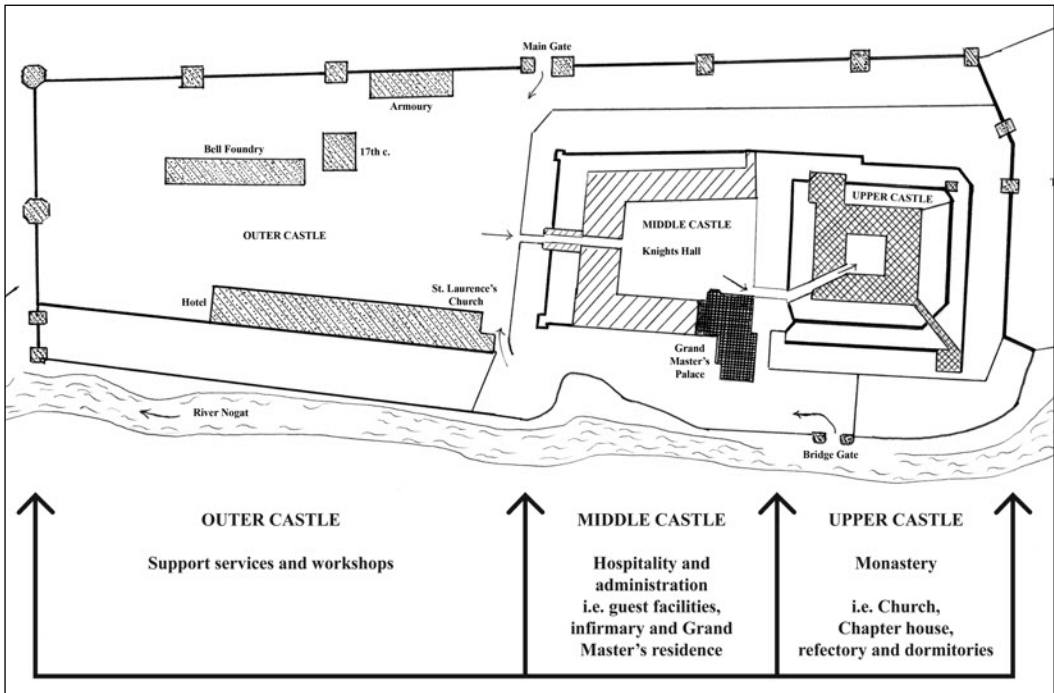


Fig. 2. Site plan of Malbork Castle.

east so that its south side was most formidably defended by walls and towers. The castle is made up of three self-contained defensive enclosures, joined together within a single complex by an intricate network of fortification.

(1) The **OUTER CASTLE** held the domestic offices, service staff, and necessary workshops to support this militant order. This area has been subject to more change than any other parts of the fortress so that the modified medieval and post-medieval buildings within the walls include staff flats, a hotel, shop, library, and conference centre.

(2) The **MIDDLE CASTLE** was made up of three ranges with the fourth side left open facing the High or Upper Castle. Entered through a formidable gate tower, this part of the fortress was the administrative centre and guest quarters of the fortress, providing all the facilities necessary for generous hospitality. The Grand Master's residence projected from the south-west angle of the Middle Castle.

(3) The **UPPER CASTLE** was the heart of this monastic fortress. The four ranges are grouped round a quadrangle providing all the functional facilities needed by this religious crusading community - church, chapter-house, bell tower, dormitories, refectory, kitchen and services. The small town of Malbork lay immediately to the south-west under the shadow of the fortress, wall enclosed but covering an area no larger than the Outer Castle.

### The Order of Teutonic Knights

For over a thousand years, the history of Poland has been one of frequent invasion, foreign domination, fluctuating borders, and multipartitioning. The border has been stable since 1945 but seven hundred years earlier, the country had devolved into little more than a number of duchies, each with its own court and social hierarchy. The region lacked any unifying authority, though border pressures frequently brought solidarity between the many dukes with the holder of the Cracow province frequently pre-eminent. 'Prussia' was the ill-

## Malbork Castle

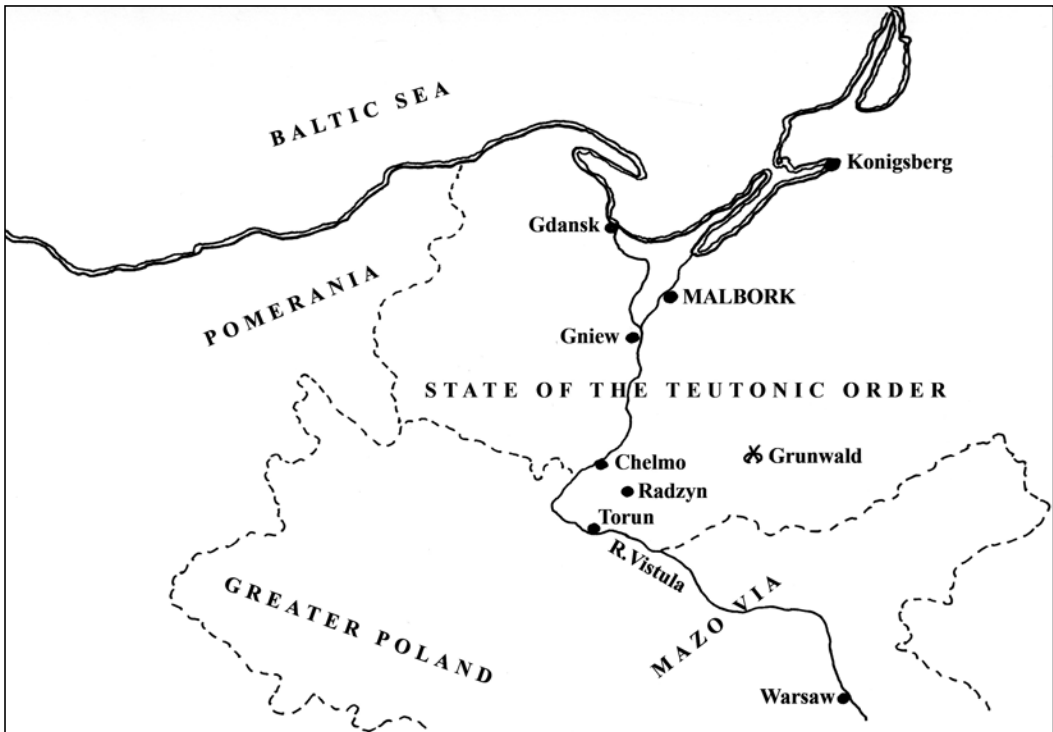


Fig. 3. *The State of the Teutonic Order.*

defined area covering the northern part of present-day Poland. It extended from the Baltic Sea, spanned the country either side the river Vistula as far as Torun, and swept in a broad arc to Konigsberg. It was a land of swamp, forests, and pagan tribes.

During the early twelfth century, the crusades had generated two religious orders that sought to protect pilgrims to the Holy Land by combining military prowess with an ascetic life - the Hospitallers and the Templars. By the close of the twelfth century, they had become military orders and were joined by a third organisation, the Order of Teutonic Knights. It had been founded by German merchants from Bremen and Lubeck who had provided many crusaders with sea-transport to the Holy Land. Confirmed by Pope Innocent III in 1199, its late arrival in the Holy Land combined with the decline of Frankish power there meant that few members joined the Order from other lands. It remained a

purely Germanic movement throughout its life, closely linked with German burghers and their trading activities who profited from an organisation that was territorially ambitious. As opportunities declined in the Holy Land, the Order concentrated its resources entirely on expanding its grip on the Baltic region through fighting the infidel there.

The winning of the east from the heathen Prussians and other tribes has been called the greatest achievement of the German people in the middle ages with the Teutonic Order and its castles playing a vital role in this settlement. The Order's invasion of Prussia began in 1226 when a leading Polish nobleman, Prince Conrad of Mazovia, invited the Teutonic knights into the area round Chelmo and Torun on the river Vistula with the dual purpose of guarding his border against the heathen Prussian tribes as much as helping to convert the pagans to Christianity. However, as the Knights

## Malbork Castle



*Fig. 4. Upper Castle from the Bridge Gate.*

pushed towards the sea, their purpose became increasingly militant as conquest took precedent over conversion. Instead of serving as vassals of the Polish princes, the Order determinedly established its own state in 1283 on the right bank of the lower Vistula - the Kingdom of the Teutonic Knights.

The next two generations witnessed the consolidation and expansion of this aggressive Order's power and wealth through the steady flow of merchants, craftsmen, and farmers from Germany to Gdansk (seized in 1308) and to the towns they established in their ever-expanding Kingdom. It was through working with the Hanseatic League on developing trade along the Baltic Sea that the Order grew rich. Politically, the Order's purpose was territorial domination; religiously, it was enforced conversion; economically, its ambition was to control the Hanseatic towns. The Order's network of 120 castles is their legacy, mainly in modern

Poland with some in Lithuania and a handful in Russia. Malbork was the earliest complete brick fortress, followed by Gniez (from 1282) a few miles south, and Radzyn (c.1300) closer to Torun.

With the conquest of the Prussian region completed, the second stage of the Order's crusade was to overrun Lithuania, the newly established state to the east developed by several pagan rulers against Mongol pressure. This vast region extended well beyond the river Dnieper, almost as far as Moscow, though relations with the re-united Polish kingdom (1320) were far from calm. The Order's conquest lasted for over a century with limited success, even though there had been a steady flow of guest crusaders from the second quarter of the 14th century as it was the only region still practising the crusader concept against the infidel. The Order was at the peak of its authority and power with many visitors following in the footsteps of

the English pioneers of 1328-29. The French followed a little later. Subsequent crusaders included leading members of the Lovell, Scrope, Beauchamp and Percy families as well as Henry Bolingbroke, earl of Derby (later Henry IV). He and his entourage fought at the siege of Vilnya (1390), stayed several months at Konigsberg, and returned there two years later.

The third phase was initiated in 1386 when the Grand Duke of Lithuania was converted and baptised, accepted the crown of Poland through marriage, and united the states of Poland and Lithuania against the common enemy, the Teutonic Knights. The Order's Prussian castles came under attack, culminating in one of the great battles of the middle ages at Tannenberg near Grunwald (1410) when the combined forces of Poland and Lithuania achieved an overwhelming victory against the Knights. The battle demonstrated that the Order was no longer invincible and it lost its ideological justification for further expansion. The Thirteen Years' War (1453-66) brought a further defeat for them when the mercenaries paid by the Grand Master to defend Malbork Castle turned against him in favour of the Polish king. Most of the other castles of the Order swiftly fell into Polish hands, and while the Order retained a foothold for a further sixty years, the German Reformation overturned their achievement and brought about the Order's secularisation and cessation.

### **Malbork Castle: Development Phases**

Three features distinguish the castles of the Teutonic Order from others in Europe. The first was that they were built for a monastic order which was as powerful a determinant in the design as their defensive needs. The second is that they were rectangular and because their location was not determined by natural features, they were usually built on lowland close to a river. This greatly facilitated the provision of moats. Thirdly, as the Baltic coastland lacked quality building stone, the castles were primarily built of brick. Bare walls were relieved by dark headers and crowned by steeply-pitched roofs and stepped gables.

Turning to the castle at Malbork, no documentation survives to its construction apart from a lost plaque recording the completion of the monastic church in 1344. The castle's development has therefore to be architecturally determined, supplemented by some of the Order's administrative records and those of the later Polish kings.

### **PHASE I: 1276 - c.1300**

The Upper Castle was the first site to be developed, initiated shortly after the failure of the second uprising of the Prussian population in 1274 so as to strengthen the rule of the Order in the region. The town received its charter in 1274 with work on the castle beginning very shortly afterwards under Commander Heinrich von Wilnowe and continued until about 1300. The Upper Castle included all the structures needed for a self-contained monastic foundation under the cloak of a formidable fortress.

### **PHASE 2: c. 1310 -1350s.**

After the Knights conquered the region of Gdansk and Pomerania in 1308, the headquarters of the Order were moved fifteen miles south from Elblag to Malbork. In the following year, the Grand Master Siegfried von Feuchtwangen and his office were transferred from Venice to Malbork, initiating the enlargement of the fortress. The modest outer yard was now redeveloped as the Middle Castle. The Knights Hall (1318 - c.1340) was created flanked by a lodging for the Grand Master at its upper end. Guest rooms were erected opposite, while the main entrance was retained but enlarged on the third side with an infirmary added nearby. During the same period, the Upper Castle was extended horizontally and vertically. The monastic chapel was remodelled and extended between 1331 and 1344 to become the principal church of the Order. The chapter house was newly vaulted, cloister walks were added at ground and first floor level round all sides of the central quadrangle, a second floor was raised, the complex was re-roofed, and a striking detached latrine tower was constructed. The Grand Master, Dietrich von Altenburg (1335-41) also constructed the first permanent

bridge across the river Nogat leading to the twin-towered Bridge Gate. At the same time, work was initiated on the Outer Castle with activity there continuing for much of the later fourteenth century.

### **PHASE 3: c. 1390 -1406.**

The lodging of the Grand Master was extended by the Rhenish architect Nikolaus Fellenstein to create a self-contained though not independent palace within the fortress. By the early fifteenth century, Malbork Castle stood much as it is seen today with occupation by the Order terminating in 1457 when the fortress fell into Polish hands.

### **PHASE 4: 1457 -1626.**

The Polish occupiers made few changes to the castle's fabric. The Grand Master's residence was occasionally occupied by the Polish kings during their visits to Pomerania but without major alterations until c.1600 when structural changes were made to the three 'royal' chambers in the Grand Master's residence. The remainder of the fortress was used mainly as an administrative centre.

### **PHASE 5: 1626 -1804.**

After the fortress was taken by the Swedish army in 1626, most of the defences of the Outer Castle were demolished while a fire in the Upper Castle in 1644 destroyed the roofs and courtyard galleries with the latter not replaced. By the late eighteenth century, the castle came to be used as an army barracks and storehouse. All the original vaults in the Upper Castle were replaced by flat wooden ceilings to facilitate warehouse useage and a textile factory was inserted in the Grand Master's palace. At the same time, the Knights Hall was converted into a drill hall with the officers occupying the former guest rooms opposite.

### **PHASE 6: 1804 - c.1850.**

Under the pressure of public opinion which invested the fortress with spiritual significance, the king of Prussia issued an edict in 1804 identifying the historical importance and preservation of the fortress. Restoration began

in 1817 and continued until the middle of the century by the engineer Carl Gersdorff working under the supervision of the architect Karl Schinkel. They viewed the fortress through the romantic spectacles of idealised imagination, and were particularly responsible for the heavy restoration of the Grand Master's palace.

### **PHASE 7: 1882-1939.**

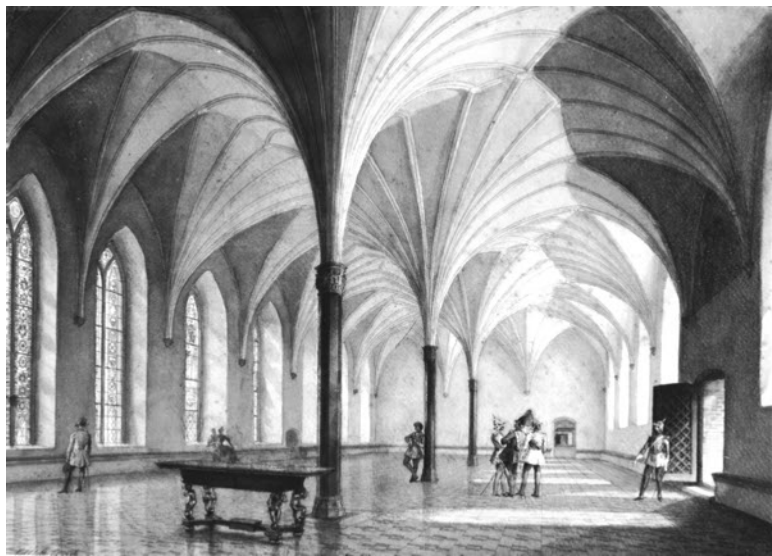
The later nineteenth century saw a more comprehensive and extensive restoration programme initiated in 1882 under the direction of Konrad Steinbrecht. His work was careful, even meticulous within the limits of his time and knowledge. But where there was no standing or recoverable evidence, his replacement work was determined on a comparative basis with other Teutonic castles. Fortunately, he kept detailed diaries of his work over a forty year period with that of the Upper Castle completed between 1882 and 1902, and the Middle and Outer castles continuing until his death in 1923. His work was maintained by Bernard Schmid until the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939.

### **PHASE 8: 1945 - 2005.**

The town and fortress were severely damaged during the War, particularly the church, the chapel below, and the adjacent bell tower as a consequence of an ammunition dump in the chapel being blown up in 1945. The roofs and vaulted ceilings of the ranges in the Upper and Middle castles equally suffered from seven weeks of shelling so that nearly fifty per cent of the castle had been devastated or destroyed by the end of the Second World War.

The restoration programme initially consisted of rebuilding and re-roofing the damaged structures (1945-70). It was followed by the conservation of the interiors, the development of the museum displays, and the repair of the painted walls (1970-2000). The restoration of the Knights Hall, the monastic church, the chapels of St. Anne and St. Katherine has still to be completed (2005). The current restoration programme is proceeding more slowly and carefully than Steinbrecht's with progress deter-

## Malbork Castle



*Fig. 5. Knights Hall. Watercolour by Johann Schultz, 1846. Castle Museum Collection.*

mined as much by the availability of funds as by agreement on the extent to which the church and chapels should be re-instated.

### Construction Materials

Proximity to the river Nogat and the marshlands of the Zulawy region were critical factors in positioning the fortress at Malbork. However, the lack of quality building stone in the region meant that it was always intended that the fortress would be brick-built, but it needed the support of firm, impenetrable foundations. It was therefore raised on a rock base, the first four to seven feet of all the walls being constructed of river boulders, infilled with smaller stones. The foundations are stepped below ground and with a slight batter above ground. Periodically, there are base supports like the footings of a buttress, but the walls of this fortress totally lack buttress-support until the expansion of the Grand Master's Palace in about 1390.

The bricks used were initially made on a site in the outer yard that preceded the Middle Castle, but during the second half of the fourteenth century, they were made on the opposite bank of the river Nogat. They varied in size but were usually 15 cms. by 28-30 cms.

by 9 ½ cms. The outer face of the east range of the Upper Castle shows that dark headers were a feature of the fortress from its inception.

The character of the brickwork today reflects its three fundamental development stages. Original medieval work is marked by weathered red bricks with no obvious lines of mortar. Steinbrecht's late nineteenth century restoration used a harder red brick with clear mortar lines. The late twentieth century restoration employed a lighter-coloured red brick with less obvious mortar lines.

Stone was only used for decorative elements, particularly in the church and chapter house entrances (Phase I) and the facade of the Grand Master's Palace (Phase 3). As the Teutonic Order was German-based, their castles were directed by German master-masons with craftsmen imported from Germany - mason bricklayers, carpenters, glaziers, blacksmiths etc. for skilled craftsmen were not available locally, only labour services.

### The Knights' Hall

The Knights' Hall and Grand Master's residence were situated in the Middle rather than the Upper Castle because receiving and entertaining guests, crusaders, and soldiers were primary elements of the Master's position and responsibility. It also enabled the quasi-monastic function of the Upper Castle to be carried out in greater quietude. It was only later that the position chosen for the Grand Master's residence facilitated its expansion towards the river during the closing years of the fourteenth century.





*Fig. 6. Knights Hall. As restored in the 1980s.*

The Knights' Hall, the great refectory for visiting knights and guests, was begun in 1318-19. It is the largest room in the castle, capable of holding up to 400 guests, and was one of the primary secular apartments of medieval Europe. However, the outer walls of this ground floor hall were built on pine logs which gave way after the devastation of 1945 so that the apartment, though re-instated during the 1980s, awaits further restoration to its former superb state. Its line of fourteen ogival windows (six to the inner court and eight facing the river), its complex vaulted ceiling supported on three slender columns, and painted walls (only a portion of the Coronation of the Virgin survives) would have made a great impression on all newcomers. The vaulting is not unlike that of the chapter house of *c.* 1330 in the Upper Castle, but the awkwardness there has been resolved in the broader space using more ribs so that the apartment looked like a line of slender spreading trees - a multiple of the chapter house at Wells cathedral. Completion during the years close to 1340 is likely.

Like the guest rooms on the opposite side of the courtyard, this great hall was a fusion between secular and military architecture and was an appropriate prelude to the Grand Master's residence as an essential element of the castle's hospitality commitment. It was the apartment where the Master would welcome his guests and lead the most important of them up the stair at the dais end to his first floor apartments.

The kitchen lay beyond the lower end of the hall with a large hearth like that in the kitchen of the Upper Castle. It had its own storeroom, garderobe, and cellar which holds evidence of the refectory's heating system of ducted warm air.

### **Grand Master's Residence - Exterior**

The Master's residence is not particularly striking when seen from the courtyard, in part because of its initial modest form (Fig. 7). Only the line of seven column-separated first floor windows next to the plain apsidal chapel hint at its importance. However, the river approach tells a totally different story with its highly elaborate frontages contrasting with the more dominating military facades of the Upper Castle (Fig 8). This palace wing is clearly a later extension, standing five storeys high, and warrants detailed examination.

The extension stands on two basement floors, not visible from the courtyard but necessary because of falling ground to the river Nogat. The lowest has narrow openings, now bricked up, while that immediately above was used for storage with larger square windows set in brick frames. Above was the Chancellery, at ground level when approached from the courtyard. Its large stone windows are separated by brick buttresses in the primary south and west faces rising the height of the building to support the embattled wall-walk (Fig 9). The floor above was devoted to the Grand Master's apartments with the elaborate windows that fill the recesses between the brick buttresses marking the principal reception rooms. The two-light upper windows are set in brick frames and the three-light lower windows in stone frames with

the buttresses between the latter replaced by pairs of stone columns to increase the light internally. The elaborately decorated wall-walk immediately above these major apartments is carried on four-centred arches spanning the machicolated recesses between the brick buttresses and protected by the eaves of the steeply pitched roof. The walk expands into six-sided turrets at the corners, brace-supported in stone, while the same material is used for the blind trefoil and quatrefoil paneled battlements to create a highly decorative head to the Palace wing.



*Fig. 7. Grand Master's Palace with St. Katherine's Chapel, and the roof of the Knight's Hall (right). From the courtyard of the Middle Castle.*

The contrast between the ornateness of this wing and the simplicity of the Knights' Hall nearby of little more than a generation earlier could not be greater. In function, the extension was not unlike the contemporary work of Richard II at Portchester Castle where he rebuilt, albeit more modestly, the hall and private apartments within the curtilage of the earlier castle, the whole enclosed and protected by the defensive walls of a long-established fort.

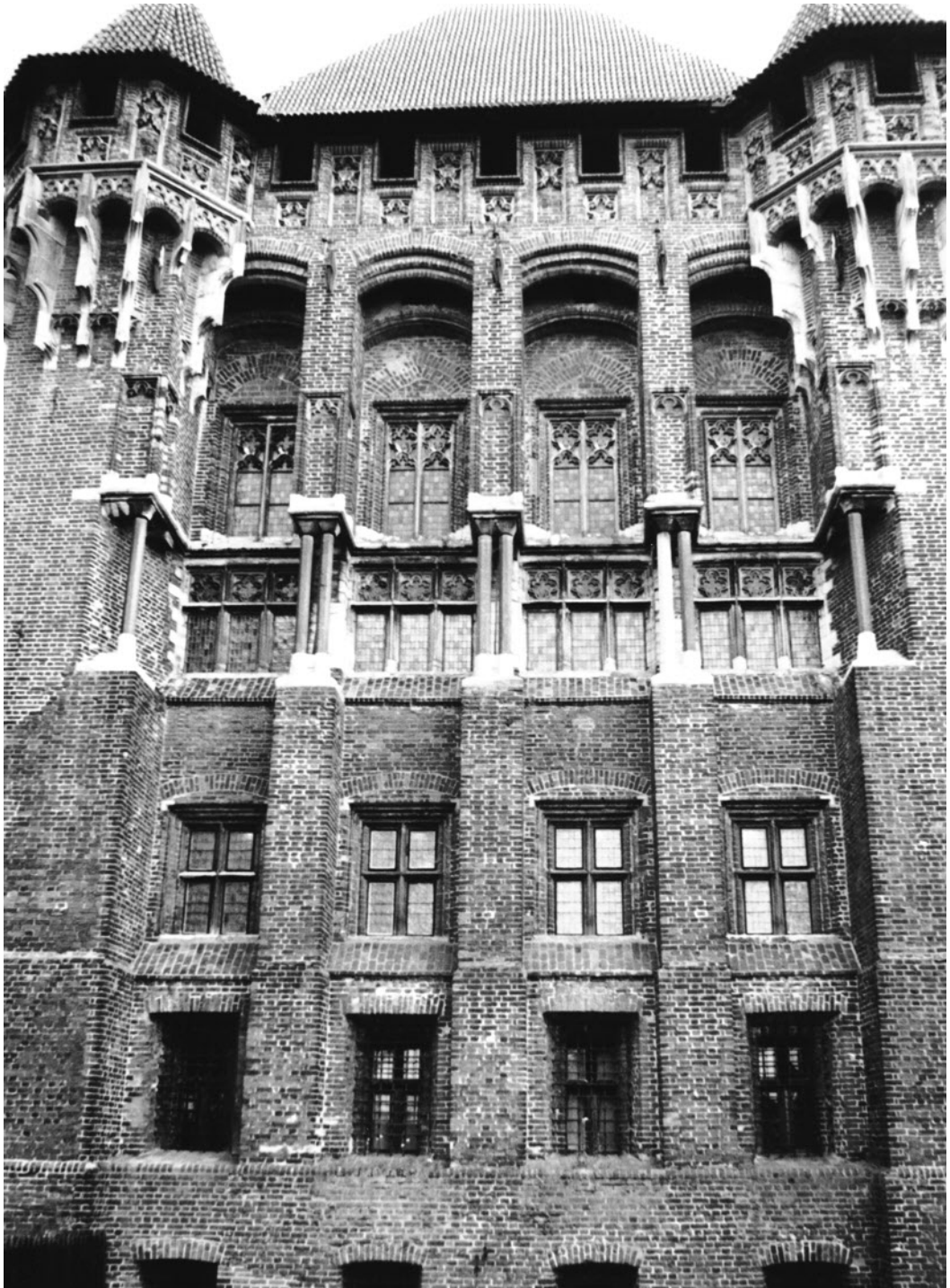
### **Grand Master's Residence - Interior**

The Master's residence was a three phased development converting a relatively modest lodging into a palace-like complex. The approach to this sequence of first floor apartments was from the stair at the high end of the Knights' Hall as in contemporary high status residences in England. It opened into an ante-room, a waiting chamber



*Fig. 8. Grand Master's Palace. South and west façades.*

Malbork Castle



*Fig. 9. Grand Master's Palace. North façade.*

## Malbork Castle

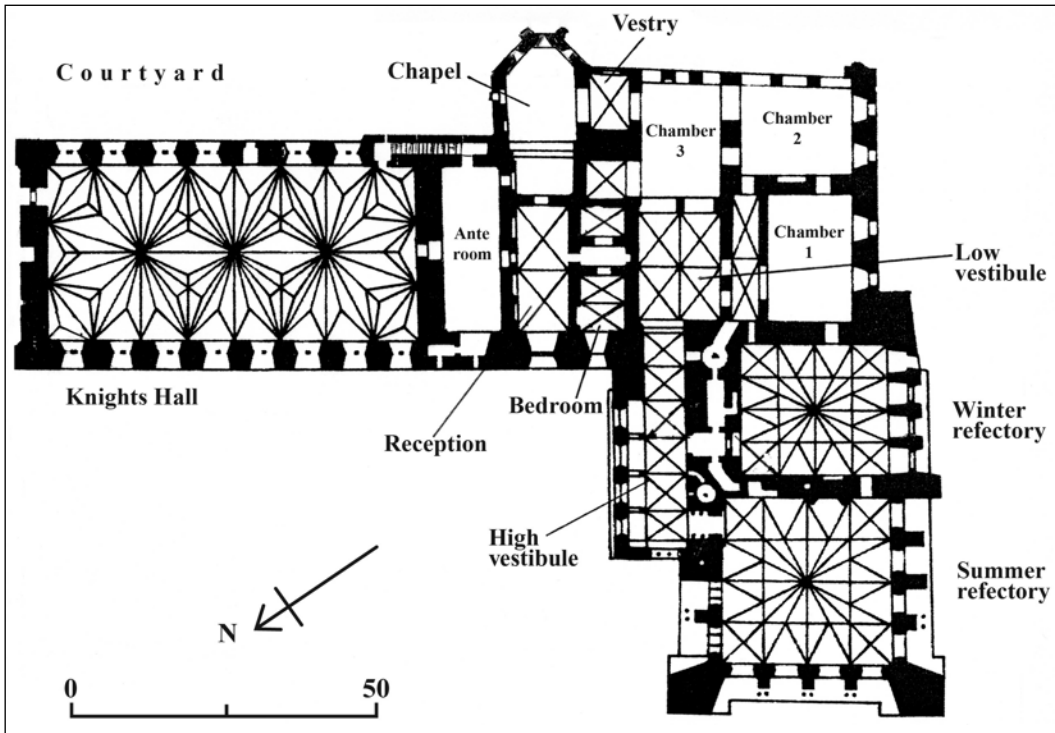


Fig. 10. Grand Master's Palace. First floor plan.

to the Master's personal apartments. The first of these has a vaulted ceiling, repainted in the late nineteenth century with arabesques above simulated wall hangings to give an idea of the former richness of such rooms (Fig 11). The fireplace is a Polish era addition. This apartment originally opened into the Master's private chapel dedicated to St. Katherine, but the approach is currently blocked pending essential restoration. Only its bare brick walls, lancet windows, and basic vaulting survived the Polish-Swedish wars in a condition that even Steinbrecht was reluctant to tackle.

A small lobby accesses the room of the Grand Master's companion on one side and the Master's bedroom on the other. The companion's room is currently used by the castle's custodians. The Master's room is lit by a single square-headed window, was warmed by a ducted heating system with an outlet near his bed recess, and benefited from its own garderobe. The walls retain their original painted decora-

tion in three planes - simulated curtaining below a line of patron saints with acanthus leaves reaching to the ceiling (Fig 19).

These rooms were originally next to a small yard, spanned by a timber gallery and stair to a large chamber, all destroyed during the expansion of these lodgings that mark the last stages of the castle's development. It was initiated by the low, broad vestibule that served as a prelude to the sequence of three reception rooms principally facing the courtyard rather than the river. The vestibule is decorated with vines and grapes with the shield of the Grand Master above the doorway to his private apartments. The one that has survived holds the arms of the Order's two most significant dignitaries, the brothers Konrad and Ulrich von Jungingen who died in 1407 and 1410 respectively. For the three reception rooms, see later.

The more narrow 'high' vestibule is a secondary continuation of the low vestibule



*Fig. 11. Reception room. Repainted decoration*

and at the same level, but spanned by a much higher vault which gives it the eponymous name. The side and end wall are filled with large rectangular windows with the principal inner wall cut away and replaced with detached columns in contrasting stone copying those on the exterior of the Summer refectory. This practice was purposed to the same end of increasing the light internally. The columns are Steinbrecht reconstructions but the window seats are original as are the stone surrounds, the well, and the sink with its drain for washing hands, mouth, and feet. There is evidence of early wall paintings under the present whitewash. The stylistic contrast between the construction of the earlier and later vestibules in less than ten to fifteen years - between gloom and lightness, routine and innovation - is maintained in the subsequent rooms.

The two reception rooms facing the river, romantically claimed to be Summer and Winter refectories, were audience chambers for receiving and entertaining envoys and honoured guests. The Summer Refectory, nearly fifty feet square and the larger of the two, used stone brought from Sweden. The windows filling 2 1/2 sides of the room are in two planes. The lower windows are of two or three rectangular lights with a multi-cusped quatrefoil above, while the upper windows are of two lights with multi-decorated heads. As noted earlier, the lower windows are separated externally by stone columns interrupting the brick buttresses



*Fig. 12. High Vestibule*

carrying the crenellated wall-walk. Internally, the upper windows are separated by the ribs of the central radiating vault. This is supported on a single granite pillar with the ribs terminating in plain corbels between the windows. The serving hatch was for meals and refreshments brought from the kitchen. The fireplace is a disfiguring insertion from the period of Polish rule. The entry door, tiles, and figurative wall paintings are late nineteenth century for this and the adjacent room were badly damaged by their use as a textile factory during the late eighteenth century. Even Steinbrecht's stained glass windows were lost during the Second World War and have been replaced with plain glass. Originally, this room was painted with a heraldic gallery of Grand Masters, complimenting those made during the first half of the fourteenth century in the chapter house of the Upper Castle.

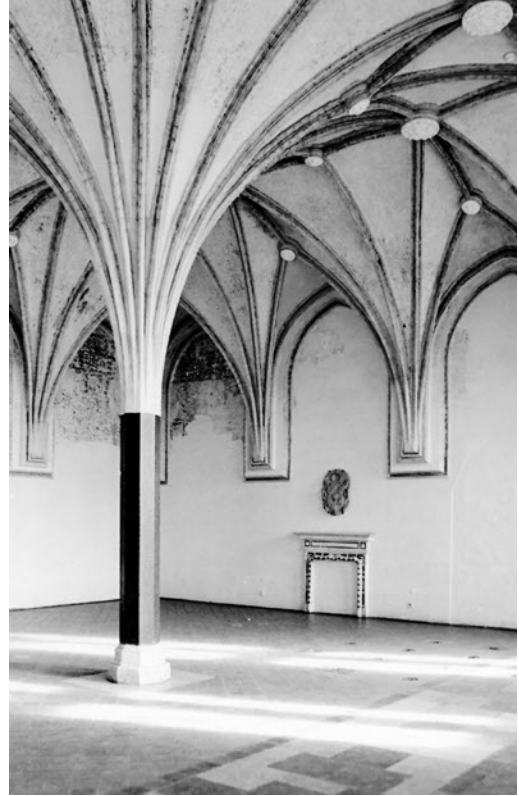
The Winter Refectory with its heating vents in the floor, is less monumental than the Summer Refectory. It has a lower ceiling but



*Fig. 13. Summer Refectory.*

was similarly vaulted from a central granite column. Yet the quality of the stone decoration is plainer than in the earlier parts of this building. There is no capital to the central column, no wall corbels, the ribs are cut off at the wall, and the windows are of two transomed lights with less ornate quatrefoil tracery. The room has a hatch for serving meals, and unrestrained evidence of original wall paintings. All these rooms were decorated by the Polish court painter, Master Peter who started work here in 1402. The vaulted ceilings were decorated with wreaths of flowers wrapped round a vine or acanthus, while the walls were decorated with figurative or heraldic motifs. The lower parts were usually covered with painted imitations of hanging curtains.

The succeeding rooms were initially approached from the 'low' vestibule. They are now called the 'royal' chambers but their origi-



*Fig. 14. Winter Refectory.*

nal purpose is unclear though they were part of the Grand Master's residence. They have generous but plain square-headed windows in a three-light stepped pattern and replacement columns to the vaulted ceiling. The first room (next to the Winter Refectory) is called the Königsberg Room through that city financing its restoration in the early nineteenth century. The central column, vaulting, and painting are entirely romantic re-imaginings for originally it consisted of two narrow rooms, each with a single window. The second chamber in the south-east corner of the Palace is also essentially a reconstruction. The windows are entirely late twentieth century for Steinbrecht inserted square-headed windows though he had no architectural or pictorial evidence to do so. The two central columns are Steinbrecht replacements as is the vaulting. The altered fireplace retains earlier columnar jambs at its side. The

## Malbork Castle

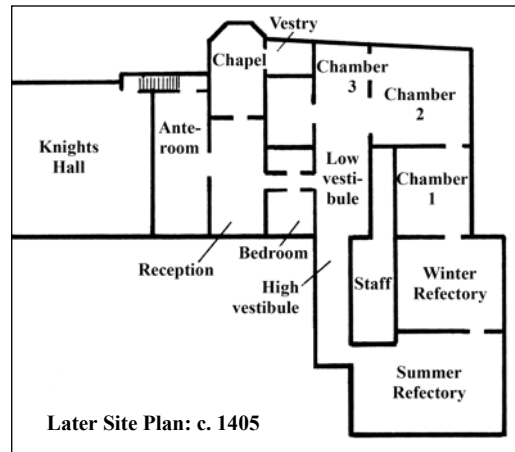
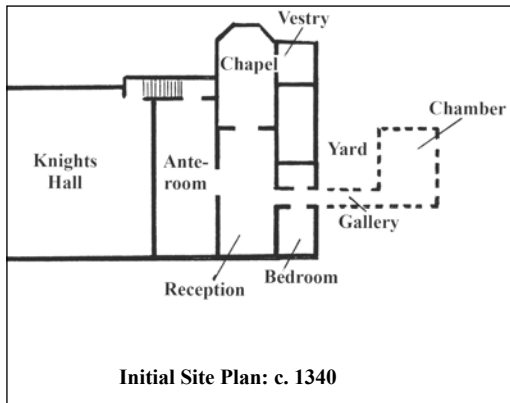


Fig. 15. Development plan for the Grand Master's Palace.

division separating chamber 2 and 3 has long been removed so that the two apartments run into each other. It is now a featureless area that currently marks the blocked entry to the Master's chapel.

The ground floor rooms under the Grand Master's apartments served three functions - administrative offices under the private rooms, the archives office and chancellery under the refectories, and staff quarters beneath the 'royal' chambers. The chancellery was approached by a vestibule as on the floor above, complete with a similarly positioned well, square-headed windows, doorways with four-centred heads, and more modest vaulting. The four rooms held the accounting system and archives of the Order with the first room where the accounts were prepared benefiting from a ducted heating system. These rooms were much abused during their use as part of the weaving factory so that their restoration has been drastic.

The development of the Grand Master's Palace occurred in three phases:

### Phase 1 c. 1320-40.

His private rooms were an extension of the west range of the Middle Castle and were coeval with it. They were centred round the chapel of St. Katherine, projecting beyond the upper end of the Knights Hall. They included the Master's reception room, his bedroom, and a further chamber abutting the galleried yard at

the side of the chapel. Chamber, yard, and gallery were replaced during Phase 2.

### Phase 2 c. 1382.

In 1382, the Grand Master Conrad Zollner Rotenstein, initiated the construction of the 'low' vestibule and the three 'royal' rooms, essentially facing the courtyard. Chamber 2 was followed by chamber I (Konigsberg Room) and then by chamber 3 in place of the yard and gallery. The windows in this and the first phase are square-headed and plain.

### Phase 3 c. 1390-1406.

This added wing boldly faces the river Nogat rather than the fortress. The 'high' vestibule and the so-called Summer and Winter refectories were completed by c.1406. The windows are still square-headed but with traceried heads.

### Assessment

By the early fourteenth century, the initial purpose of the Order of Teutonic Knights had become diffuse. It now depended on highly trained warriors rather than on pious monks as militancy compromised religious conversion. This affected the architectural development of the fortress. The reception of guests, whether as soldiers or crusaders, and the care of the sick became the essential element and purpose of the Middle Castle as much as the quasi-monastic layout was of the earlier Upper Castle. The



*Fig. 16. Upper Castle. First floor dormitory of c. 1280 showing basic vaulting.*

result was a combination of defensive and domestic architecture - as much a monastery and residence as a fortress. Hence the combination of external impregnability with internal elegance.

Because of its scale, Malbork was more like a fortified city than a fortress an almost self-contained sequence of structures capable of holding hundreds rather than a hundred occupants owing allegiance to the Grand Master. The closest analogy in England is the fortified outcrop at Durham above the river Wear, crowned by the castle of the prince-bishop and the cathedral-priory of the Benedictine order. But that settlement was under two separate authorities. The royal fortress at Vincennes outside Paris is a closer analogy with the royal residence in one corner of the fortified enceinte, gate and multi-tower protected enclosing a chapel as large as that at Malbork and many houses, workshops, and stables within an enclosure comparable with Malbork's Outer Castle.

The defence of their seat of power was vital to an Order which felt like a colonial power controlling a region far from its ethnic origin. So the fortress was equipped with all the defensive elements known at the time. Throughout its development, the mighty bulk of the Upper Castle, the quasi-monastic heart of the Order, dominated the entire complex as it still does today. Initially, it was similar to other strongholds on the borders of the Teutonic state, but the changes made during the mid fourteenth century reflected the Upper Castle's importance as the seat of a masterful religious order. The Middle Castle was developed to serve the administrative needs, hospitality, and ceremonial function of the Teutonic state, while the Grand Master's Palace was continuously expanded to match the perceived standing of the head of the Order. In its final form, the Grand Master's residence expressed the power and majesty of the Teutonic Order and was an appropriate setting for entertaining royal and honoured guests.



## Malbork Castle

Though this paper is concerned with the growth and form of the Master's residence, it is necessary to refer to some of the features of the earlier Upper Castle. Architecturally, there is a marked contrast between the severity of the late thirteenth century monastic fortress and the greater richness of the succeeding development of the Middle Castle. This is partly a reflection of the change from the Romanesque to the Gothic style, though this occurred later at Malbork than further south in Poland. It was initially more obvious internally than externally for the severe basic vaulting of c.1280 in the ground and first floor rooms of the Upper Castle had given way by the 1330s to the multi-ribbed but restless vaulting of the monastic chapter house. This was almost immediately supplanted by the more ordered form in the church and the classical simplicity of the second floor refectory. All

this work was a precocious development, the earliest in the Baltic coastal region. It was possibly influenced by English sources such as the chapter houses at Lincoln (c.1250) and Wells (c.1310).<sup>(2)</sup> However, this initiative was not developed further over the next sixty years with little difference between the vaulting of the Knights' Hall (c.1340) and that of the refectories in the Grand Master's residence (c.1400). The source for the distinctive architectural changes in the Palace lay elsewhere.

The windows in the Knights' Hall were markedly larger than those of the previous generation and show a growing preference for tracieried heads. By the close of the fourteenth century, these changes had contributed to the extremely individual style of the palace-com-



*Fig. 17. Grand Master's Palace. Winter refectory showing vaulting of the 1390s*

plex. This was explored in three directions, through the wider use of building materials, expansive windows, and multi-shaped forms. The use of contrasting stonework - structurally and decoratively - made an immediate impact in a hitherto totally brick environment. Furthermore, the virtuosic display of external brickwork was heightened by combining it with highly decorative stonework. This ostentatious display of pattern and relief was in particular contrast to the character of the Upper Castle of a century earlier.

The windows to the world were much broader than before and were square-headed instead of following the two-centred form which had still been used as late as c.1330 for St. Katherine's chapel and vestry. The upper



*Fig. 18. Grand Master's Palace. West façade with windows of Summer refectory and crenellated parapet.*

plane of these distinctly shaped windows were now filled with multi-cusped tracery. Additional light was also gained by eliminating some of the outer wall thickness by using slender columns instead of buttresses on three sides of the Grand Master's residence, The trick was repeated internally to stunning effect in the 'high' vestibule. But multi-shaping did not stop there. Doorway heads were four-centred rather than two-centred, the battlement panels encompassed trefoils and quatrefoils, the turrets were six sided, while the outer elevation was five storeyed instead of the previous two and three storeys. And whereas the practice had been followed for all outer-facing windows in towers and ranges to be relatively modest at the higher levels, those in the Grand Master's Palace boldly increased in size with the rise in elevation. It all betrays a confidence ill-suited to the Order's purpose which essentially collapsed within fifty years.

Arching over these changes is the dominating one that Malbork reflects the combination of religious and secular forms. It was a differentiation felt by nineteenth and twentieth century architectural historians but not by the builders who initially developed a monastery in the form of a castle, and subsequently introduced a secular palace within a religious fortress. The fourteenth century umbrella and multi-ribbed vaults, the traceried windows, and brickwork decoration were the primary cross-over factors in the Grand Master's residence. Internally, its decoration was more routine with wall paintings of simulated wall hangings, heraldic devices, and arabesque foliage. Clement VI's contemporary work at Avignon's Papal Palace (1342-52) was architecturally more severe, internally and externally, but of greater decorative richness. Though Clement encouraged the use of groined vaults, internal enrichment essentially came from more innovative



Fig. 19. Grand Master's bedroom. Unrestored wall painting.



Fig. 20. Summer Refectory.

wall paintings and handsome furnishings. However, Avignon and Malbork shared the same practice of locating the administrative heart of the organisation directly under the residential quarters of its leader. And while the pope controlled the Christian faith in Europe from Avignon, the Grand Master dominated the Baltic lands and beyond from his equally magnificent palace at Malbork.

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**Endnotes:**

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 (2) P. Frankl, *Gothic Architecture*, ed. P. Crossley (2000) 366-7.

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