Castles and Fortifications.

Fortifications before the Norman Conquest.

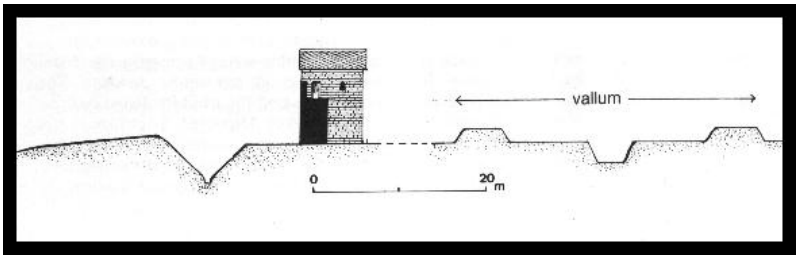
After completing these activities you should be able to:

- ✓ Describe the types of defensive structures used in England before 1066
- ✓ Identify strengths and weaknesses in pre Norman defensive structures.

Source A
Aerial Image of Maiden Castle, a Briton fort constructed prior to the Roman Invasion. In the image you can make out the defensive ramparts around the fortification. These are still very high and steep today, so must have been quite daunting to face during the Iron Age.

Source B
Due to the design of Maiden Castle, catapults were particularly effective. Judging from contemporary scale drawings, the east and west entrances to the hill fort were about eight hundred feet across. By applying the Pythagorean Theorem it can be deduced that a shot to the top of the hill fort was about 300 yards-just within range of a catapult positioned directly at the bottom of the hill. At the north and south points, however, the banks are only 200 yds. across. Therefore, from fifty yards back one Roman artilleryman could cover a piece of the earthwork about one hundred yards wide from the top of the hill to the bottom. With a number of catapults fire could have been spread over a large area of the earth or concentrated in other areas if necessary. ©STAAC 1995

Source C
Profile of the Planning for Hadrian's Wall. This Roman construction stretched from the North Sea to the Irish Sea.



Source D

Model of a Legionary Fort. The Romans build hundreds of fortifications such as this one around Briton. They were used mainly as barracks but did have some defensive qualities.

Activities

(1) **Look at Sources A and C**. What do the Iron Age and Roman constructions have in common?

(2) **Look at Sources A and C.** What are the major differences between the Iron Age and Roman fortifications shown in these sources?

(3) **Look at Sources A and B.** What were the main weaknesses in the design of Maiden Castle?

(4) **Look at Sources A, B and C.** Roman fortifications were usually made of stone, whilst often retaining the use of ramparts. Why was this change of design necessary?

(5) **Look at all of the Sources.** Describe the main defensive features of fortifications used in Britain during the Iron Age and the era of the Roman Empire.

(6) **Look at all of the Sources.** What defensive features do these fortifications have in common? Why do you think this is the case?

(7) The Iron Age fort, Maiden Castle, was built in an age where hand-to-hand combat was the method of attacking a structure. What themes can be identified in the above sources to explain the change in defensive structures over time?

Think about:

- ✓ Why the Castle was built.
- ✓ The method by which the Romans took the Castle.
- ✓ Why the Romans used different materials to construct their fortresses.