WORLD HERITAGE LIST

A) IDENTIFICATION

Nomination: The Castles and Town Walls of King Edward I in Gwynned

Location: Gwynned, North Wales

State Party: United Kingdom

Date: December 24, 1985

B) ICOMOS RECOMMENDATION

That the proposed cultural property be included on the World Heritage List on the basis of criteria I, III and IV.

C) JUSTIFICATION

All throughout his reign (1272-1307) Edward I, King of England, worked to expand and defend his domain, implementing at the same time a military and settlement policy whose traces are still visible from the Pyrenees to Scotland.

In the southwest of France some of the walled towns of the Aquitaine domain, which were the fruit of his initiative, such as Montpazier or Hastingnes, are among the most famous examples of medieval urban planning. But it is in Wales that the major illustration of the great construction policy of his reign are to be found: a series of superb castles, which in some cases are combined with new towns surrounded by fortified walls.

In 1276 Edward I waged war on the Welsh prince Llewelyn. In 1277 the latter, defeated, was able to keep only Gwynned in the northwest of Wales, the cradle of Welsh independence, from which in 1098 his ancestors had succeeded in expelling the Normans led by Hugh of Avranches. Edward I seized control of the principality of Gwynned during a second victorious campaign in 1283. From then onward he undertook a castle-building program of unprecedented scale. What he did was to station garrisons so as to quell any possible revolts, foster the settlement of castral towns by settlers and finally illustrate in a more symbolic than strategic fashion English power.

In twenty years' time ten fortresses were built, not to mention those which were restored after being wrested from the enemy.

The United Kingdom is nominating four cultural properties chosen from among this series of constructions located close together.
The typological, technical and stylistic coherence of these constructions are explained by the fact that all were built by the same man, James de Saint George, the king's chief architect in Wales. This enhances a nomination which is exemplary for both the value of the individual properties and their overall significance.

The castles of Beaumaris and Harlech, begun in 1283, are of virtually the same design — the massive square of the inner wall is surrounded by an octagonal wall flanked by towers — both being the work of the Savoyard architect James de Saint George, the greatest military engineer of his time.

The Caernarvon and Conway ensembles, where the royal castle, the ordinary residence of the governor and garrison are the keystone of the military installation which also comprises an adjacent fortified town, are very instructive regarding Edward I's policy in Wales. The castral towns, of a regular layout, were inhabited by English settlers who were able to muster up a militia in times of revolt. The Welsh population was kept separate (a former town located extra muros subsisted along with the village at Caernarvon). The franchise charters (Conway's dates back to 1284) provided for only one market, the one in the fortified town, thereby placing the region's economic life under the dominion of its new masters.

ICOMOS recommends the inclusion of the four cultural properties listed in the nomination on the World Heritage List on the basis of criteria I, III and IV.

Criterion I. Beaumaris and Harlech represent a unique artistic achievement in that they combine the double-wall structure which is characteristic of late 13th-century military architecture with a highly concerted central plan and in terms of the beauty of their proportions and masonry. These are the masterpieces of James de Saint George who, in addition to being the king's chief architect, was governor of Harlech from 1290 to 1293.

Criterion III. The royal castles of the ancient principality of Gwynedd bear unique testimony to construction in the Middle Ages in so far as this royal commission is fully documented. The accounts published by Colvin (The History of the King's Works, London, 1963) specify the origin of the workmen, who were brought
in from all regions of England, describe the use of quarried stone on the site. They outline financing of the construction works and provide an understanding of the daily life of the workmen and population and thus constitute one of the major references of medieval history.

**Criterion IV.** The castles and fortified towns of Gwynned are the finest examples of late 13th-century and early 14th-century military architecture in Europe. Their construction, begun in 1283 and at times hindered by the Welsh uprisings of Madoc ap Llewelyn in 1294, continued until 1330 in Caernarvon and 1331 in Beaumaris. They have only undergone minimal restoration and provide, in their pristine state, a veritable repertory of medieval architectural forms: barbicans, drawbridges, fortified gates, chicanes, redoubts, dungeons, towers and curtain walls.

ICOMOS, April 1986.
HARLECH CASTLE

EAUMARIS CASTLE