

Fortis. Forteresse. Fortress.

A settlement designed to withstand enemy encroachment. A place of solitude and hope for some and a place of fear and dread to others. Those sent unwillingly, seldom emerge unaffected by the events that transpired there and those lucky enough to have a place within its walls are quick to call it home and defend it. Some say there are no similarities between the current batch of fodder in the Scottish Premier League and Anne Boleyn, but the fact remains when both summoned to the fortress' unwillingly (Celtic Park and the Tower of London respectively) they got fucked.

Everything I have learned about fortresses in modern football I got from GCSE history. Just as Miss Harty repeated to my 12-year-old self, there are three types of a fortress. Motte and bailey, stone keep and concentric. Your motte and bailey fortresses are the easiest to penetrate and therefore the least daunting of the three. Stone keeps have a little more about them but still fall short to the upper echelon of a concentric fortress.

Brunton Park, the motte and bailey of the north. Elevated on a small hill (motte) that comprises the 2008 unsuccessful championship playoff run and the fact that Rory Delap was once on loan there, sits Brunton Park. Surrounded by a vast open area (Bailey) made up of League 2, the seven teams pushing for the final playoff spots and the ever-lucrative, seemingly never closing loan market. A fortress susceptible to an occasional onslaught but whose walls still stand in hope of a brighter tomorrow. Memories of Matt Jansen, Leon Osman and Danny Graham still burn behind the eyes of the Cumbrians as they believe better days are only over the horizon, even if an under-strength MK Dons side have other ideas.

The stone keep of St. James' Park. A huge beacon in the great northern city ran by an out of favour King. A team soaked in success from yesteryear and loyal subjects whose alliance has never faltered. A historical timeline in reverse at Newcastle United with the European renaissance preceding the dark ages of Mike Ashley. They told tales of great warriors such as Ginola, Robert and Dabizas around the city but now the name you hear most is that of the monarch who has poisoned this once great army. On a cold winter evening, you'll still find the devoted Geordies following their men into battle,

shirtless and with battle-cries as loud as ever. One day the king will fall and Newcastle United will rise again. Until then, we wait.

Some fear concentric masterpieces are lost into football stadia of old. In decades past, standing at football matches was the norm. Now, all-seater stadiums are compulsory in some divisions but there are some who fly the safe standing flag. One of these pioneers is Celtic Park. Waving flags amass a sea of green and white provide a flashback to colosseums you've only read about in literature. The townsfolk flock to the arena to glimpse the bravest and most feared of knights, Scott Brown. Taking centre stage surrounded by the admiration of thousands he is home. He is judge, jury and executioner. The talisman of this garrison and defender of its walls. The weight of expectation lies heavy upon him similar to a suit of armour. His right foot hits with power and precision of a jousting delivering a fatal blow with his lance. Unlike the knights of old, he doesn't fight for the heart of a maiden yet for something more important, 3 points against St. Mirren on a Tuesday night.

We've come a long way since the 1800s but the concept of a fortress remains at least in modern football. The art and necessity of entertainment within its walls. Lords and ladies looking down upon what they created whilst trying their utmost not to be overthrown. The selection of meats and ales distributed by vendors during the pre-battle banquet. The faithful masses that make the pilgrimage to their sacred place of worship unknowing whether they'll encounter pain or glory. Regardless of the strength of your defences or the caliber of knights there in, defend what is yours until the death for your fortress is your home.