

LLANDOUGH CASTLE

900 Years of History

1100 to 2004

Few houses in Glamorgan have enjoyed a longer, more continuous or more varied pattern of occupation than Llandough Castle. Listed among the medieval castles and castellated houses of the county the present structure at Llandough, hidden behind the church and screened by walls and trees, displays few apparent traces of either military or domestic usage before the eighteenth century. But from the fabric of the building, and more particularly from the documentation of the property and its occupants, it is possible to build a history of the many families and individuals who lived at Llandough Castle from the twelfth to the twentieth century.

1100 The Lordship of Llandough and St Mary Church in Glamorgan was granted to a family by name of Walsche by the Norman conquerors around 1100 by Robert Fitzhamon, the overlord, based at Cardiff Castle. The Walsche family were also granted estates in the Langridge area of Somerset and owned land in Hutton, near Weston super Mare. At both locations there is a fine memorial brass in the local church which compliments the brass in the church at Llandough.

1165 The first recorded evidence is picked up from the Liber Niger of 1165 where it is mentioned that Richard Walsche was holding Llandough & St Mary Church, being one knights fee to the custodian of Cardiff Castle. The Liber Niger (black book) is one of a pair, the other being the Liber Regius (red book) 1166 compiled in the 12th Century transcribing important lists of knights fees established before and after 1135, the death of Henry 1. A knights fee was a large holding granted by the paramount Lord of the area following the conquest, in this case the Lord of Glamorgan, and in return the Knight would serve the Lord in war and attend at Cardiff Castle with a body of armed men for a certain period each year to help garrison the Castle plus building a defensive structure in his own area.

1262 In a survey or " extent " of the Lordship of Glamorgan, Adam le Walsche is mentioned as one knights fee. By 1262 this service at Cardiff Castle had been converted to an annual payment of 6/8d.

1320 An extent recording Walsche still holding Llandough and by then one of only ten families surviving from the 1262 extent.

There is no evidence remaining today of the original defensive structure at Llandough which is not too surprising as most, if not all, of the initial building would have been in wood rather than stone. However there is a hint in a field name Caer Baily or Cabaily in 18th and 19th Century maps which might indicate the site of the original Castle, some 200 yds South West of the existing site on the promontory (an excellent defensive position) commanding the Thaw, South of the Church either under the Castle Precinct development or just across the road above The Cottage in Llandough. The well in the gardens a few yards North of the Churchyard wall is the

original source of water and that is bound to have been within the defensive system.

1400 More problematical is the fate of the original Castle. The Iolo Morganwg MSS details the great battle of 1400, Bryn Owen, also known as the Battle of Lanquian on Stalling Down, when the victorious Owen Glendower destroyed the Castles of Penlline, Llandough, Talavan, Llanblethian and several others plus burning many villages including Llanfranach and Aberthin. Iolo unfortunately, while saving and transcribing for posterity many original manuscripts, also had a penchant for inventing history to suit his thesis. The truth could be more mundane, after nearly 300 years, the Walsche family made a decision to rebuild in stone instead of wood on a more suitable nearby site.

1427 Vestiges of a 15th Century Tower house and Hall block have been identified within the existing structure and this is likely to have been built by Robert Walsche who died in 1427. In Llandough Church there is a monumental brass of Wenllian Walsche, his sister, the wife of Walter Moreton the constable of Cardiff Castle. Robert's will includes the following bequests;- ' £10 to two chaplains to celebrate for my soul in the church of Llandough continually for one year. I bequeath to the rector of Llandough 20s for my tithes forgotten, to the rector of Langan 6s 8d, to the rector of Seintathan 6s 8d, to the church of Llandough 40s.' The heiress Elizabeth Walsche married Payn de Van of Marcross in 1429, thus ending over 300 years of occupancy by the Walsche family.

1444 The de Van ownership did not last long as in 1444 the manor and lordship of Llandough & St Mary Church were sold to Sir William Thomas (Herbert) of Raglan, Earls of Pembroke and subsequently through marriage ownership passed to the Somersets, Earls of Worcester.

1530 The Castle evidently fell into disrepair as John Leland, antiquary to Henry V111 described the site in the late 1530's as - " Llandouhe, a castelle much in ruins on a hille. against this village is a bridge of stone caullid Pont Llandouhe. Syr Edward Carne bought this Lordship of the Erie of Wicester that now is ".

1536 However in 1536 a saviour appeared on the scene in the form of Sir Edward Carne who purchased the Llandough & St Mary Church estate from Henry Somerset, 2nd Earl of Worcester and restoration of the main body of the Castle and Courtyard Tower was completed by 1538 when he married; architectural evidence suggests a sixteenth century house complete with an impressive entrance gatehouse. Edward Carne, lawyer, diplomatist and king's envoy was already by 1536 a man of considerable authority and wealth soon to increase through royal favour with his appointment as a commissioner for the dissolution of the monasteries. Towards the end of his life he lived in exile in Rome where he died in 1561.

The Carne family owned the estate for 150 years, towards the end of this period the heiress Martha Carne married Sir Edward Mansel (Talbot). In 1650 her father had died, Martha being born in the year of his death. During the minority of Martha her stepfather, Sir William Basset of Beaupre discharged the responsibilities of guardianship in the management of the estate and the Basset family took up residence in the Castle for a few years. The memorial plaque in Llandough Church records the death within a few weeks of each other in Spring of 1713 of John aged 23, William aged 18, and Friswith aged 26. The inscription is followed by a rhyming couplet " William died first and lies outward of all, John lies in ye middle and Friswith next ye

wall ".

1578 Llandough shown on William Saxton's map of Glamorgan with a Castle sign.

1677 Martha Carne married Sir Edward Mansel, and the Llandough & St Mary Church estate would in due course be merged into the Penrice and Margam estate.

1685 In a settlement of 1685 the estate formally passed to the Mansel (Talbots). For the following 230 years of Mansel ownership the Castle was rented out, none of the Mansel family took up residence, preferring their other substantial properties in South Wales.

1698 The medieval military origins of the Lordship of Llandough continued to be recalled in annual payments of ward silver and castle guard silver to the owners of Cardiff Castle as successors to the Lords of Glamorgan, with Sir Edward Mansel recorded as making such payments to Thomas, Earl of Pembroke as late as 1698.

1706 Leased to Robert Button, younger son of Cottrell, buried at Llandough in the church in 1708, where his infant daughter Emelia, the eventual heiress of the Cottrell estate, had been baptised a few months earlier in that year. The family name of Button lives on at the Golf course at the recently opened Cottrell Park golf club.

1708 Leased to Richard Savours of Llanblethian. A trustee of Robert Button's estate, all five of his children were born at the Castle.

1738 Leased to William Mathew of Aberamman, husband of Grace Carne of Nash - a renewal of the Carne connection with the castle - and a former Sherrif of Breconshire.

1747 Leased to Trevor Griffiths of St Ann's, Westminster, a tailor. A friend of the Mathew family and probably a guardian of Edward Mathew.

1757 Leased to Edward Mathew of Aberamman, a County Magistrate & Sheriff of Glamorgan.

1770 The Racing List of Cowbridge Races held on Stalling Down left under the floorboards of the domed room, the old music room for the ladies of the Castle. The list has the entrants for 3 days racing among whom are Creaping Cate, Thoughtless Kitty and Macaroni so unusual names have a long history. Most of the owners are well known gentry in the Vale of Glamorgan including John Edmondes Esq who four years later took up the lease for the Castle. He had two horses at the meeting, Heath-cropper and Gimcrack, the latter is intriguing as this could be the famous grey, just 14 hands high, who won 26 of his 36 races between 1764 and 1771. Because of his small stature, Gimcrack had a great advantage in what was known as ' Give and Take ' events in which the weights were allocated according to the size of horses and in the race list, Gimcrack was entered for ' Friday's Give and Take '. One of the most important races for two year olds, established in 1846 and held annually at York, is named after him .

The printer, D. Thomas, based in Llandoverly, is the brother of Rhys Thomas who owned the first printing press in S.Wales in Eastgate, Cowbridge.

However there is a mystery as the list clearly states D.Thomas, Cowbridge. It is the only known example of his work in the Vale.

1775 Leased to John Edmond, Sheriff of Glamorgan whose family had estates at Beaupre, St Hilary and a town house in Cowbridge, died 1778. This was the era when the Rev John Walters, rector of Llandough 1759-1797 who resided in the Cottage (the rectory being uninhabitable) produced his famous Welsh/English dictionary, the initial volumes being printed by Rhys Thomas in Cowbridge. One of his sons, aged 15, kept a diary and among many references to the Castle are the following -

"28th May 1777 - Not at school, it being a holiday. Colonel Edmond caught some of the boys a shooting in his woods, and drove them away in confusion."

"18th Oct 1777 - My father goes to Cowbridge and increases his illness. Mr Hopkins drinks tea with us and also the Castle Ladies."

1778 Leased to Lt Col Thomas Edmond, brother of John, of the First Regiment of Footguards who was a colourful character. County magistrate and would be country gentleman, he fathered numerous illegitimate children but had no offspring by his lawful wife one Jennet A'Court Ashe, formerly Mrs Kelly, a lady with an apparent predilection for military men and a capacity for widowhood. Thomas died in the Castle in 1794, his widow became the leasee but lived in their Cowbridge town house property - the Old Hall - which is now the adult education centre, and the Castle was sub-let for the next 9 years.

1794 Sub-let to Sir Robert Lynche Blosse. A member of an ancient Irish family who married Eliza Gorman in Llandough Church in 1801.

Then - Colonel Henry Andrew Cerjat of the 16th Light Dragoons, a citizen of Switzerland. His wife, Catherine Annabella and her infant son were buried in Llandough churchyard in 1803.

Then - Major Andrew Armstrong, who moved to Great House, Llanblethian in 1803.

1803 Leased to John Price, responsible for major embellishments to the Castle and built on the East Wing for servants Quarters as well as substantial works in the Castle grounds with terracing and woodland walks. In 1816 he supervised the laying of lead pipes from a spring in Castle Wood and a pump to take water directly to the Castle, the work being carried out by a brother of the Bird family of Cowbridge the local ironmongers, the family are still in the area as Birds of Cowbridge. To such an extent he was called one of the three fools of Glamorgan for expending so much of his own money on another persons property. He became a Deputy Lt of Glamorgan.

1820 Leased to Richard Morgan of Hill House, Abergavenny, a Lt Col in the Glamorgan militia, a magistrate, eisteddfod bard and Deputy Lt of Glamorgan. He and his wife were frequently abroad and a further period of sub-let occurred. They died within a few months of each other and lie buried within a railed enclosure at the East end of the churchyard.

1835 Sub-let to Bishop Edward Coplestone of Llandaff, who gave Cowbridge the handsome clock for the Town Hall.

1844 Leased to Colonel Robert Boteler, Royal Engineers of Dunraven. Deputy Lord Lieutenant of Glamorgan. He provided a system of flues to heat the greenhouses which were on the Southside of the Churchyard wall facing Castle Precinct. The Census of 1851 shows 13 servants. He erected the Conservatory in that year, died in 1866. In more recent times the Conservatory has seen the wedding receptions of Judith and Carolyn, daughters of the Anderson's (1970-2004) - 2 summer balls and various TV programmes including Caryl Parry Jones's Christmas Eve concert in 1998.

1866-69 Untenanted. A receipt records the payment to William Llewellyn, Esq from C.R. Mansel Talbot Esq, MF of £20 - 8s for the "making a valuation" at Llandough Castle of delapidations to the premises.

1869 Leased to Francis Stacey, a barrister and high Sheriff of Glamorgan. Another who embellished the property, the castellated bay windows on the West corner survive. He was a scholar at Eton, went up to King's, Cambridge, became a fellow and married in 1862. He proposed and donated the great West window of King's College Chapel, the largest single scene in stained glass in Europe when consecrated in 1879, depicting the Last Judgement. According to his family this donation is known as Stacey's Repentance for a devastating scandal while at Cambridge. Buried in the churchyard and commemorated in the stained glass of the Church.

1870 Some interest was taken in the Llandough Castle estate by the owners as T. Mansel Talbot established hunt kennels and stables with living accommodation for the hunt servants in Llandough in 1870. As the foxes were extinct in the Vale of Glamorgan through shooting, snaring and unorganised hunting by the farming community, he procured a number of French foxes and it is alleged they were so agile that they lived among the branches of trees in Crabbla Wood, Llandough.

1894 Leased to Edward Henry Ebsworth, a businessman in the Russian tallow and fur trade. President of the Royal Porthcawl Golf Club. He was a keen cricketer and became the patron and creator of the cricket ground in Cowbridge. In 1896 he hired William Russell to be the team's professional and groundsman. Russell also played 102 matches for Glamorgan; a quality all rounder he played a significant part in Glamorgan winning the Minor County Championship in 1900. Ebsworth gave the ground to Cowbridge in 1910, and built a swimming pool in the river Thaw behind the British Legion in 1911. Made a Freeman of Cowbridge.

Mrs Campbell-Swinton, a family friend of the Ebsworths met Gabriel Faure, the French composer, in London in 1898 and Faure stayed at the Castle that summer and wrote his 7th Nocturne in the domed room. It was around this time that Mr Campbell-Swinton, a consultant electrical engineer to the German Telefunken company, accompanied Marconi at Lavernock Point, South Glamorgan, for the first radio transmission across water witnessed by German and British naval experts. They both stayed at the Castle.

1914 The end of the 230 years of the Mansel Talbot ownership when Sir Sydney Hutchinson Byass, a prominent Port Talbot industrialist purchased the property, died 1929, buried in the churchyard. Lady Byass moved in the early 30's to

live at St Judes, Llandough.

1922 In May Ralf Bird, ironmonger in Cowbridge, was asked by Sir Sydney Byass to demonstrate one of the new Atco motor mowers.
" It was a telephone call destined to alter my whole way of life. I arranged for the Atco demonstrator to come from Newport, and we stayed at the Castle for some hours to make quite sure that the gardener and chauffeur were completely familiar with the operation and maintenance of the mower. I used the mower myself and thoroughly enjoyed doing so as it was very easy to handle. Having a nine blade cylinder, it cut beautifully. The sale of this mower was so exciting and inspiring that I made up my mind that mowers would provide us with a living. "

1928 Bert Jenkins, whose father was main groom at the hunt stables in Llandough, had fond memories of the Castle cricket team.
" The team was made up from members of the castle outdoor and indoor staff , about 40 in total and they played on a well mowed and properly laid out pitch near the hunt stables. My brother Tom and I, together with a few other children would always go to watch on Saturday afternoons in the summer and quite often would keep score for them, using a makeshift scoreboard. The tea was laid out on two long trestle tables close by the stable. It was lovely food, cream cakes and beautiful sandwiches, all from the castle. After tea when the players were back on the field, we would watch Mrs Chappell, the wife of the head groom, like hawks. When she beckoned to us we would sit down and eat what was left. We had such wonderful food there, things we could never have at home. It was always a great day when the Llandough Castle team played at home ! "

1934 The property was leased by Lady Byass to the Ministry of Labour who established a juvenile instruction centre for young boys from the valley communities who had worked in the mines and had broken down in health, this being a time of severe economic depression. Juveniles were those under 21 years of age. About 20 to 30 boys stayed for 10 weeks and were then found jobs in industry or hotel work with support services until they reached 21.

The staff consisted of Kenneth Maxwell,superintendent; Ken Gomer,teacher; Blodwen Williams,housekeeper, plus domestic staff,cook and assistant and Jack Evans,gardener. Many of the boys had extremely poor health and were low in spirit with threadbare clothes. On entry they were supplied with working clothes - trousers, shirts, blousson, shorts, jumpers, gym shoes and sports gear.

The timetable comprised the 3 Rs, history, geography, woodwork, gardening and hobbies (swimming and rambles). Trips were taken in the summer to the seaside at Llantwit Major or Southerndown, some had never seen the sea before or played on the sand.

The Prince of Wales and Rab Butler were among some who took an interest. The daughter of Mr Maxwell, the centre's superintendent, visited in June 2001 having left Llandough at the age of 5.

1939 A further lease by Lady Byass, to a charity - Kinderstransport. The aim was to rescue Jewish children from Nazi persecution and some 10,000 were saved from Austria, Germany, Poland and Czechoslovakia. 50 young children were housed at the Castle, as one said " It had electricity,running water and heat. It was like

heaven. " Mimi Ormond returned in 1989 with her family during the 50th reunion held in London.

1940 The estate was requisitioned by the wartime Government and among others the Canadian Airforce HQ were billeted at the Castle. The German surrender in 1945 was signed by Field Marshall von Runstedt who was subsequently billeted as a POW in Llandough, the house in which he was billeted is named after him. Runstedt was allowed to take walks through the grounds and woods of the Castle.

1946 Sir Geoffrey Byass sold the property to Russell Shephard. In a poor state of repair and with the centre portion badly damaged by fire, the new owner removed the central block (stone from here was used to extend the City Inn at Llansannor), leaving the Hall Block and Tower, while the East Wing was converted into three flats. The Gatehouse was in a ruinous state.

1952 Purchased by Arthur George Davies, a medical practitioner.

1957 Purchased by Peter Warren Harvey.

1963 Purchased by Arthur Capps, MD of Seccombes a Cardiff Dept Store. Roger, his son, renovated the Gatehouse in 1969.

1970 Purchased by Nigel Gerald Anderson, MD of J.R.Freemans,cigar manufacturers and Jt MD of Gallaher Tobacco Ltd, past president of the Institute of Marketing in Wales, chairman of Cowbridge cricket club, co-founder of the Squash club and Anne Anderson, oil and water colour artist. The 1770 racing list discovered under the floorboards of the domed room. The Miracle Maker,a puppet and animated full length feature film of the New Testament,script written by Murray Watts in the domed room in the mid-90s, had its World Premier in Cardiff in 1999. Also in the late 90s the Castle featured in Trevor Fishlock's series of TV programmes of walks through Wales. The pillars and railings along the north side of the drive were designed and built by Nigel in 1987.

So how does one sum up after 900 years of continuous site occupancy ? One can do no better than quote Hilary Thomas who in her article in the Journal of Glamorgan History Vol XXX111 1989.

" There is a strange irony in the fact that whereas Margam Castle, that grandiose gothic mansion upon which C.R.Mansel Talbot lavished so much wealth in the 1830s is now a roofless shell, the Castle in Llandough which he and his predecessors neglected still survives, albeit in truncated form, as a private residence,while its medieval tower, transformed into a Gatehouse in the 16th Century has undergone a 20th Century metamorphosis into a distinctive Vale residence. "

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