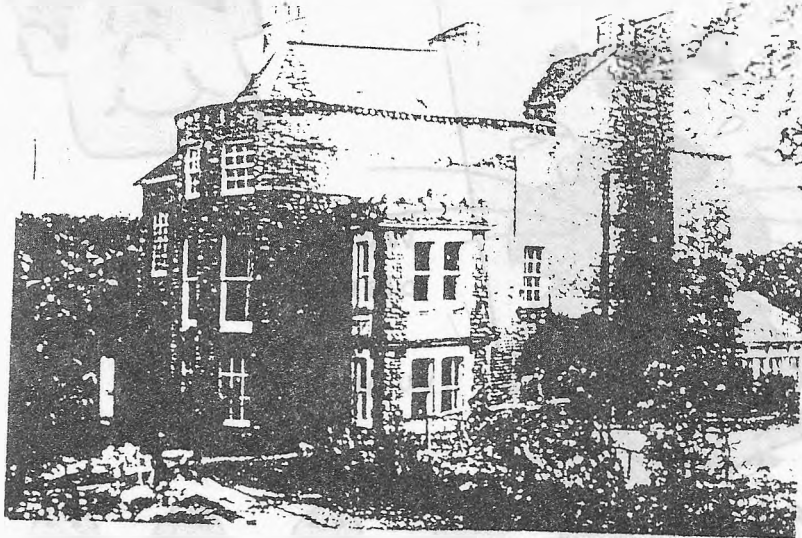


THE BUILDINGS OF COWBRIDGE.



LLANDOUGH CASTLE

It is probable that an early medieval castle was built in Llandough by members of the Walsche family, Lords of the Manor of Llandough and St Mary Church from the 12th Century, but no trace of such a structure is to be found today. What does survive within the fabric of the present-day Llandough Castle are the remains of a 15th Century castellated mansion house where members of the Walsche family are known to have resided. One of the last members of that family, Wenllian, was buried in the Parish Church in 1427 and is commemorated there by a memorial brass.

From the Walsches, Llandough Castle and its lands passed to the Van family and then to the mighty families of Herbert (Earls of Pembroke) and Somerset (Earls of Worcester). IN 1536 the entire Llandough and St Mary Church estate, including the Castle, was purchased by Dr (later Sir) Edward Carne, younger son of Nash, whose career as a lawyer, diplomat and royal envoy in the service of Henry V111, Mary and Elizabeth, brought him considerable wealth and influence. The refurbishment of Llandough Castle in the 16th Century can be attributed to Carne, and it was here that his family resided until he aquired the dissolved

Priory of Ewenny. Thereafter the main seat of the family was established at Ewenny in the house built alongside the former monastic buildings. When Edward Carne purchased Llandough Castle the house was in a ruinous state, but a comprehensive programme of refurbishment, including the transformation of an old courtyard tower into an impressive gatehouse, made the property a suitably prestigious residence for a man of Carne's status and ambitions.

The Carne family connection with Llandough continued for several generations, but in 1677, following the marriage of the heiress Martha Carne with Sir Edward Mansel of Margam, the entire Llandough estate, including the Castle, became part and parcel of the Penrice and Margam estate, and thus it remained for over two centuries. The Mansels and their successors the Mansel Talbots never seriously contemplated residence at Llandough Castle but leased the house and lands to a succession of tenants, among whom, in the 18th Century were members of the Button family of Cottrell, Mathews of Aberamman, Savours of Breach and Edmondos of Cowbridge and St Hilary.

The Castle provided those families with a substantial property, conveniently situated in the favoured Vale. Its accommodation included a ground floor hall and parlour, four first-floor bed chambers and four garret rooms, together with domestic offices and outbuildings and a porter's lodge in the gatehouse. It must, however, have been a draughty, cold abode. Surviving records reveal a state of constant dilapidation and decay. Few tenants appear to have honoured their responsibilities for repair and

by the 1800 the entire house was in urgent need of renovation. The roof was unsound, doors and window frames were rotten, the hall floor was described as totally decayed.

Providentially, there appeared upon the scene a man who was prepared not only to take on the tenancy of the Castle but also to expend considerable sums of his own money in improving and enlarging the property. That man was John Price, member of the Llangynwyd family of that name and nephew of philosopher Dr Richard Price. John Price and his wife lived at Llandough Castle for some fifteen years during which time the house was enlarged to include additional parlours on the ground floor, an impressive new drawing room on the first floor for the convenience and enjoyment of the invalid Mrs Price, and an entire new east wing to accommodate the servants quarters and domestic offices. And it was Price who first supplied the house with the inestimable boon of a piped water supply. For his pains in lavishing so much money upon another mans property Price earned the title of one of the three fools of Glamorgan (the names of his fellow fools are not recorded!).

The Prices were succeeded by the Morgans of Hill House, Abergavenny, and it was during one of the extended periods of Continental travel indulged in by the Morgans that the castle attracted a clerical resident, non other than the then Bishop of Llandaff, Edward Coplestone. For the Bishop, who resided in his diocese for only part of the year and for whom no official Bishop's Palace was provided, Llandough Castle was a convenient and commodious base from which to perform his episcopal duties.

Despite John Price's lavish improvements successive tenants throughout the 19th Century continued to put their own mark

upon the Castle and its grounds. Colonel Robert Boteler R.E. who followed the Morgans exercised his engineering skills in building the stone walls which still define the boundaries of Castle gardens and churchyard. Of the extensive improvements carried out by the barrister Francis Edmund Stacey who lived at the Castle in the latter decades of the 19th Century little survives apart from two crenellated bay windows on the west side of the house. The most enduring evidence of the Ebsworth family's years of residence is the glass ballroom or conservatory built by them, a structure still in use today. E.H. Ebsworth a businessman with interests in the Russian tallow and fur trades, was made a freeman of Cowbridge Borough in 1911.

When Sir Sidney Hutchinson Byass, a Port Talbot businessman, purchased Llandough Castle and lands from the owners of the Margam Estate in 1914 he became the first owner-occupier to live in the Castle for almost three centuries. Soon after Sir Sidney's death in 1929, the Castle passed into new ownership and the ties of centuries between Llandough and the Margam Estate, between Mansels, Comes and Walsches were severed. In more recent years the central portion of the Castle has been destroyed, part of the surviving structure has been converted into flats, the 16th Century gatehouse has been turned into a self contained residence. Llandough Castle survives as a truncated version of its former self and displays few traces of its long history. But just beyond the Castle walls lies the little Parish Church of Llandough, and monuments in church and churchyard recall the names of families still remembered and long forgotten who lived at Llandough Castle.

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