

Jasper Tudor, Margaret Beaufort, and the Mystery of Ebboth Castle

In March 1457, Jasper Tudor, Earl of Pembroke, and Margaret Beaufort, the thirteen-year-old widow of his late brother Edmund, were guests of the Duke of Buckingham at his castle of Ebboth (also referred to as Greenfield). Today, this location is identified as Maesglas, a district of Newport near the River Ebbw.

This visit raises intriguing questions: Where exactly was this castle that hosted such distinguished guests? And why did the Duke of Buckingham choose this site instead of his more prominent castle in Newport?

The Historical Context

Jasper Tudor was a significant figure in the Wars of the Roses, a conflict between the rival royal houses of Lancaster and York that dominated England in the mid-to-late 15th century. As the son of Owen Tudor and Queen Catherine of Valois (widow of Henry V), Jasper was the half-brother of King Henry VI and a staunch Lancastrian. By 1457, the Lancastrian cause was under threat, and Jasper's position in South Wales was vital to maintaining the king's influence in the region.

Margaret Beaufort, though still a young teenager, was already a central figure in the Lancastrian dynastic struggle. The widow of Edmund Tudor, she had given birth to her only son, Henry Tudor, just months earlier in January 1457 at Pembroke Castle. With her husband dead, she was now under the protection of her brother-in-law, Jasper, who would become instrumental in securing her son's future as Henry VII, the founder of the Tudor dynasty.

Why Ebboth Castle?

The choice of Ebboth Castle over Newport Castle suggests that this site held advantages a few possible reasons for this decision include:

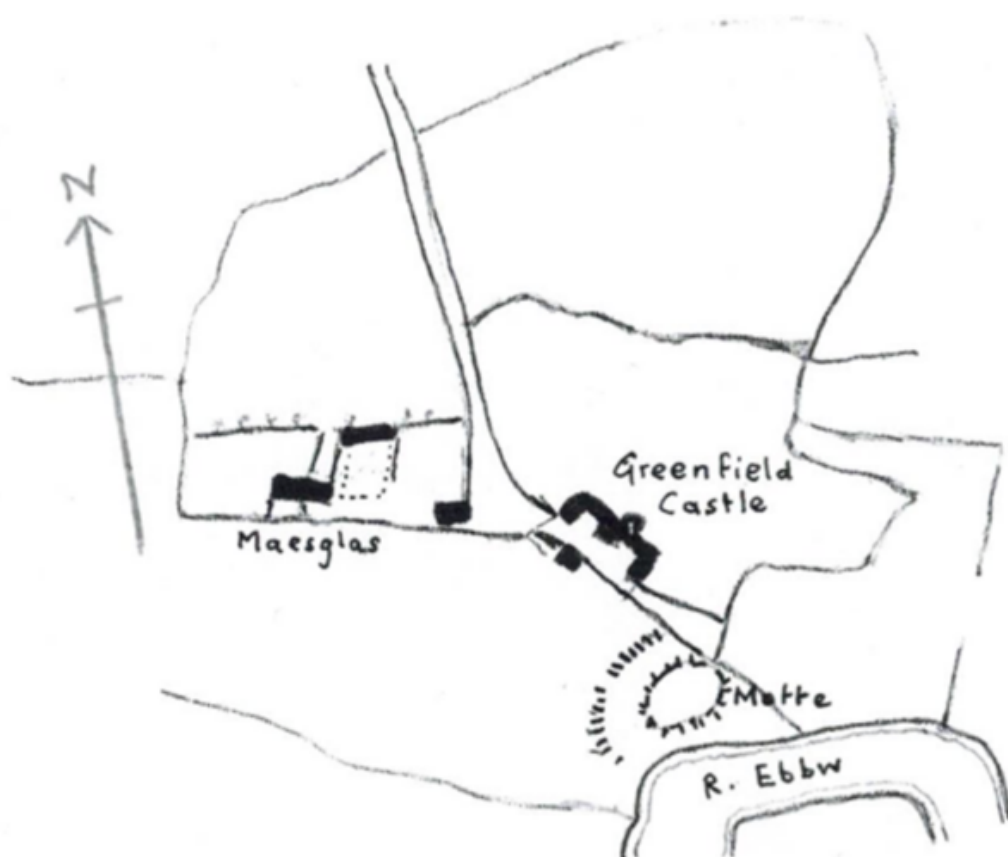
- Greater Privacy and Security – Newport Castle, a major fortification on the river Usk, was a well-known and politically significant site. If Jasper and Margaret were engaged in sensitive discussions or needed discretion, a lesser-known castle might have been preferable.
- A Strategic Location – Ebboth Castle may have offered better access to routes leading into the Welsh heartlands, allowing for movement without drawing attention.
- A Personal Residence – It is possible that the Duke of Buckingham or his family maintained Ebboth as a personal retreat, separate from the more publicly recognized Newport Castle.

Where Was Ebboth Castle?

The exact location of Ebboth Castle remains uncertain, as it has seemingly disappeared from historical records. However, there are several theories about where it may have been situated:

1. Near Maesglas and the River Ebbw
 - The name "Ebboth" suggests a connection to the river Ebbw, which flows through the area. The castle may have been positioned along its banks, possibly at a now-lost site in Maesglas.

- Maesglas is known to have been an area of early medieval settlement, which makes it plausible that a castle or fortified manor once stood there.
2. A Lost Manor or Hunting Lodge
 - Some historians suggest that Ebboth may not have been a full-scale castle like Newport but rather a fortified manor house or hunting lodge used by the Duke of Buckingham's family.
 - This would explain why it does not appear prominently in later records—it may have been a secondary residence that fell into disuse.
 3. Absorbed or Destroyed Over Time
 - Many minor castles and manors in Wales were abandoned, repurposed, or dismantled after the Wars of the Roses and later conflicts.
 - If the castle was made of timber or a combination of timber and stone, it might have deteriorated more quickly than larger stone fortresses like Newport Castle.



Castle Doorway



"Doorway at Castle (possibly Maesglas Farm, Pont Ebbw, Newport)"

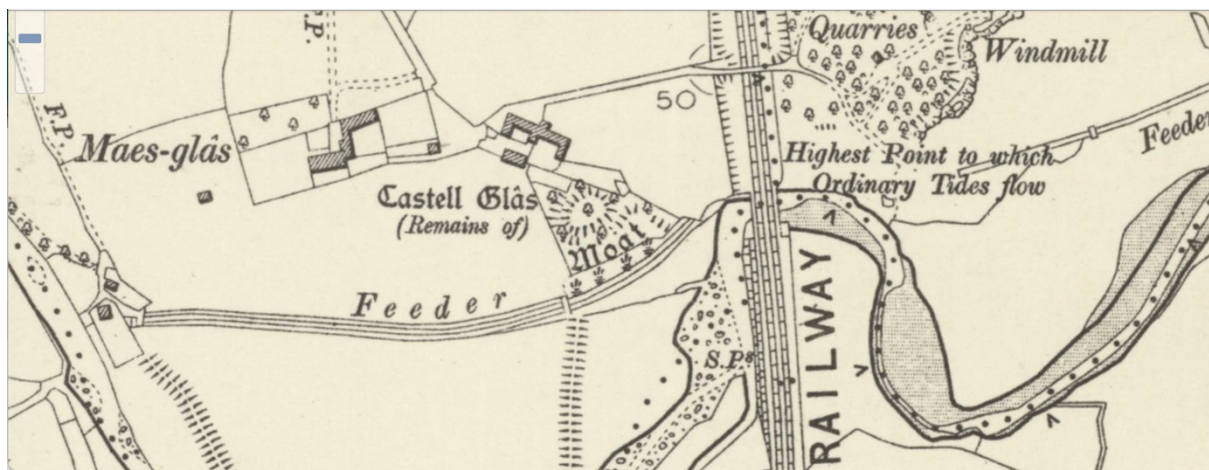
Sketch by William Henry Green, 8 July 1892

From the Scrapbook of William Henry Green, page 146

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Castell Glas (Motte) 1888-1915



Castell Glas: A Possible Clue to Ebboth Castle?

The mention of **Castell Glas** as a **motte** (a type of early medieval earthwork castle) could provide a valuable clue to the location of the lost **Ebboth Castle**.

What Was Castell Glas?

- **Castell Glas** (meaning "Green Castle" in Welsh) is recorded as a **motte-and-bailey** structure in the Maesglas/Pont Ebbw area of Newport.
- Motte-and-bailey castles were introduced to Wales by the Normans in the **11th and 12th centuries**, typically consisting of a wooden or stone keep built on an artificial mound (the motte), with a courtyard (the bailey) enclosed by a ditch and palisade.
- The name "**Glas**" (meaning "green" or "blue-green") aligns with **Greenfield**, which is another historical reference to the area.

Could Castell Glas Be Ebboth Castle?

Given the similarity in names and the fact that both sites are linked to **Maesglas**, there is a strong possibility that Castell Glas and Ebboth Castle were the same place or closely connected.

- **Supporting Evidence:**
 - Both names appear in historical records relating to medieval Newport.
 - Castell Glas is specifically listed as a **motte**, which fits the description of a defensive site used during the medieval period.
 - The possible **lost manor house at Greenfield** could have been a later development on or near the original motte.

What Happened to Castell Glas?

Like many smaller Norman castles, Castell Glas may have **fallen into ruin**, been **dismantled**, or been **built over**.

- If it was primarily a **wooden structure**, it would have decayed over time, leaving only earthworks behind.
- If it was later replaced by a stone manor house or another structure, its original purpose may have been lost in historical records.
- The expansion of **Newport and Maesglas** in later centuries could have buried any remaining evidence under modern development.

Further Investigation & Archaeological Potential

- **LIDAR (Light Detection and Ranging) scans** of the Maesglas area might reveal buried foundations or ditches.
- **Historical maps** could indicate early references to Castell Glas or associated landholdings.
- **Excavations in Maesglas** could uncover Norman pottery, masonry, or other signs of a medieval presence.

Conclusion

While Ebboth Castle remains elusive, Castell Glas provides a compelling lead. If they were the same site, it could explain why Ebboth Castle does not appear in later records—its name may have simply changed over time. Further research into Castell Glas could help unravel the mystery of Newport's lost medieval stronghold.

Records.

Castell Glas: Unveiling Newport's Overlooked Medieval Fortification

Castell Glas, translating to "Green Castle" in Welsh, is a lesser-known medieval site located in the Maesglas area of Newport, Wales. This site, also referred to as Greenfield Castle or Maesglas Castle, presents intriguing insights into Newport's feudal past.

Historical Overview

The origins of Castell Glas date back to the medieval period, characterized by its motte-and-bailey design—a common fortification style introduced by the Normans. This structure typically featured a wooden or stone keep atop a raised earthwork (motte), accompanied by an enclosed courtyard (bailey). Over time, evidence suggests that the site may have evolved to include masonry elements, indicating its sustained strategic importance.

Physical Remains

Presently, the remnants of Castell Glas are subtle yet significant. A modest rectangular mound, approximately 25 meters square, endures within a children's play area on the periphery of a Newport City council estate. This grassy elevation is believed to be the vestige of the original motte. Historical accounts, such as those by D.J.C. King, describe the site as having "remains of a low motte, formerly associated with some masonry."

castlewales.com

In the 19th century, the site garnered attention when W.H. Greene sketched a doorway at the castle, possibly linked to Maesglas Farm, Pont Ebbw, Newport, on July 8, 1892. This sketch, found on page 146 of Greene's scrapbook, is preserved by the Torfaen Museum Trust.

monmouthshireantiquarian.blogspot.com

Decline and Legacy

By 1622, records indicate that Castell Glas had been sold, and by 1645, it was noted to have "disappeared." However, when historian William Coxe visited around 1800, he observed remnants, including a high mound and a medieval range featuring a square tower with a spiral staircase, a stone edifice containing several apartments, a large fireplace, and a fine Gothic entrance with several Gothic doors. These structures were reportedly incorporated into a farm.

ancientmonuments.uk

The Kemeys family, notable landowners in the region, owned both Greenfield Castle and Maesglas Castle, as well as Rogerstone Castle, also known as Tribginlion. Records show that Rogerstone Castle was sold by the family in 1611, and today, its ruin consists of a grass-covered motte.

castlewales.com

Current Status

Today, Castell Glas remains an understated historical site, with its earthwork remnants largely overlooked amidst modern developments. Despite its diminished prominence, the site offers valuable insights into Newport's medieval fortifications and warrants further archaeological exploration to fully comprehend its historical significance.

For those interested in exploring Castell Glas, it is located in the Gaer community of Newport, with the Ordnance Survey Map Grid Reference ST302858.

[Gatehouse Gazetteer](#)

In summary, Castell Glas stands as a testament to Newport's rich medieval heritage, embodying the architectural and feudal characteristics of its time. Its remnants, though subtle, continue to pique the interest of historians and archaeologists alike, offering a tangible connection to the region's storied past.

The Political Significance of the Visit

The visit of Jasper Tudor and Margaret Beaufort to Ebboth Castle took place at a crucial moment in English history. The Wars of the Roses were intensifying, and the fortunes of the Lancastrians were beginning to wane. Henry VI's reign was increasingly unstable, and rival claimants from the House of York were gaining strength.

Jasper Tudor's role in Wales was to consolidate Lancastrian support, and his presence in Newport suggests that he was actively maintaining alliances. Margaret Beaufort, as the mother of Henry Tudor, represented the future of the Lancastrian line, even if few at the time could have predicted that her son would one day become king.

By the 1460s, the Yorkist Edward IV had taken the throne, and Jasper was forced into exile. Margaret Beaufort's fortunes fluctuated as she navigated the dangerous political landscape, ultimately securing a place for her son through careful alliances and strategic marriages.

Conclusion

The mystery of Ebboth Castle remains unsolved, but its brief mention in the records of 1457 offers a fascinating glimpse into a pivotal period of English and Welsh history. Whether a lost castle, a manor house, or a strategic retreat, it played host to figures who would shape the future of England. Today, Maesglas and the surrounding area hold the secrets of this forgotten stronghold, waiting for further discoveries to shed light on its past.

Jasper Tudor in Wales: A Key Lancastrian Stronghold

During the Wars of the Roses, Jasper Tudor played a vital role in maintaining Lancastrian influence in Wales. As Earl of Pembroke, he controlled Pembroke Castle and several key strongholds across South Wales, acting as a defender of King Henry VI's interests.



By 1457, the Lancastrian cause was under increasing threat from the Yorkists. Wales was a divided region, with noble families split between loyalty to Lancaster and York. Jasper used his position to reinforce alliances with Welsh lords, particularly those who opposed the rising power of the Yorkist Richard, Duke of York.

Jasper's network in South Wales included castles such as:

- Pembroke Castle – His primary base of power, where Margaret Beaufort gave birth to Henry Tudor in January 1457.
- Tenby – A key port, later used to smuggle Henry Tudor to safety in Brittany in 1471.
- Carmarthen Castle – Another stronghold where Jasper was active.

His presence in Newport and at Ebbotth Castle in 1457 suggests he was consolidating control over the region. At this time, the Duke of Buckingham was also a prominent figure in South Wales, which may explain why Jasper and Margaret sought his support.

Jasper Tudor <https://tinyurl.com/Jasper-Tudor-History>

Margaret Beaufort's Early Struggles

Margaret Beaufort's story is one of resilience and political survival. Born in 1443, she was married at just twelve years old to Edmund Tudor, who was over a decade older than her. As a wealthy heiress with a claim to the throne through the Beaufort line (descended from John of Gaunt), she was a valuable political asset.

However, her life took a tragic turn when Edmund Tudor died in captivity in 1456, likely of plague, while imprisoned by the Yorkists at Carmarthen Castle. Now widowed and pregnant, Margaret was in a precarious position. She found refuge at Pembroke Castle under Jasper Tudor's protection, where she gave birth to Henry Tudor in January 1457.

Her stay at Ebbboth Castle in March 1457 was likely part of Jasper's efforts to secure safe passage and political backing for her. Margaret would go on to remarry several times, carefully navigating the shifting tides of power, eventually ensuring her son's rise to the throne in 1485.

Possible Archaeological Evidence for Ebbboth Castle

Ebbboth Castle remains an enigmatic site, with no clear ruins or surviving structures identified. However, several theories and archaeological clues might help locate it:

1. The River Ebbw Connection

- The name "Ebbboth" (or "Ebbboth Castle") strongly suggests a location near the River Ebbw, which runs through modern-day Maesglas in Newport.
- Castles were often built near rivers for defensive and logistical purposes, meaning a site along the Ebbw's banks is a strong possibility.

2. Greenfield / Maesglas Area

- Historical records refer to "Greenfield," another name for the area, which suggests a specific medieval estate or manor house.
- It may have been a fortified manor house rather than a full-scale castle, which could explain why no major ruins survive.

3. The Lost Motte-and-Bailey Theory

- Some medieval castles were built as simple motte-and-bailey structures, consisting of a wooden tower on an earth mound with a surrounding courtyard.
- If Ebbboth was of this type, it may have been dismantled or eroded over time.

4. Archaeological Discoveries in Newport

- Excavations in Newport have uncovered medieval structures that hint at lost fortifications. While none have been definitively linked to Ebbboth Castle, further research in Maesglas could yield more evidence.
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Why Did Ebbboth Castle Disappear?

Unlike major castles such as Newport Castle (which survived in some form), Ebbboth seems to have vanished from historical records. There are several possible reasons:

1. Abandonment After the Wars of the Roses
 - Many minor strongholds fell into disuse after their political or military significance declined.
 - If Ebbboth was a temporary or secondary residence, it may not have been maintained long-term.
2. Destroyed During Later Conflicts
 - Wales saw multiple periods of conflict, including the Tudor consolidation of power and the English Civil War.
 - Any remaining structures could have been dismantled, repurposed, or destroyed.
3. Absorbed by Later Development
 - The expansion of Newport, especially during the Industrial Revolution, may have led to the castle's remains being built over.
 - The Maesglas area underwent significant urbanization, making it difficult to locate medieval structures.

Conclusion:- Castell Glas – The Lost Castle of Maesglas, Newport

Within the modern landscape of Maesglas, Newport, **Castell Glas** (meaning "Green Castle" in Welsh) is a little-known medieval motte-and-bailey site with a rich but largely forgotten history. This site, also referred to as **Greenfield Castle** or **Maesglas Castle**, played a role in Newport's feudal past and may even be linked to the **mysterious lost stronghold of Ebbboth Castle**.

In the case of **Castell Glas**, the name might have referred to the **surrounding landscape** rather than the colour of the castle itself. Given that "Greenfield" is another historical name for the site, it's possible that in this context, "Glas" meant **"green" rather than "blue."**

Dating back to the **Norman period**, Castell Glas was constructed as a **motte-and-bailey fortification**—a defensive structure consisting of a raised earthwork (motte) supporting a wooden or stone keep, surrounded by a lower courtyard (bailey). Such castles were common across Wales following the Norman invasion as a means of asserting control over the land.

Today, the physical remnants of Castell Glas are subtle but still visible. A **rectangular mound**, measuring approximately 25 meters across, remains within a children's play area near a modern housing estate in Maesglas. Historical records, including observations by **D.J.C. King**, describe this as the remains of a motte that was once associated with stone masonry, suggesting later modifications to the original wooden structure.

The site gained attention in **1892**, when **William Henry Greene** sketched a **castle doorway**, possibly linked to **Maesglas Farm**, hinting at surviving medieval structures in the area. Older historical descriptions suggest that Castell Glas included a **tower with a spiral staircase**, a **stone-built hall**, and **Gothic-style doors and fireplaces**, elements that were later incorporated into a farmstead. By **1622**, the site had been sold, and by **1645**, records indicate

that it had disappeared. However, accounts from the **18th century** still describe visible remnants of medieval stonework.

Castell Glas was once associated with the **Kemeys family**, influential landowners in South Wales who also controlled **Rogerstone Castle (Tribginlion)** and other estates. Over time, the site faded from prominence, eventually being absorbed by later developments in Newport.

For those interested in visiting, **Castell Glas is located in the Gaer community of Newport**, with the **Ordnance Survey Grid Reference ST302858**.

In modern Welsh, "**glas**" typically means **blue**, but historically, it could also mean **green, grey, or even a blue-green shade**, depending on context. In medieval Welsh, "**glas**" was often used to describe natural features like rivers, fields, or foliage, where it could mean "lush green" or "blue-green."

Sources:

- William Henry Greene's 1892 sketch of the castle doorway (Torfaen Museum Trust).
- **Gatehouse Gazetteer**, listing Castell Glas as a medieval motte site.
- **Castle Wales** website, detailing the Kemeys family's landholdings.
- **Historical records of Newport and Monmouthshire**

Graham T Emmanuel 2025