

MARCCROSS, MONKNASH AND ST. DONATS : HISTORICAL PREFACE

The community areas of Marcross, Monknash and St. Donats are maritime communities situated in the south west corner of the County of South Glamorgan. The communities are set in level or gently rolling landscape bounded by formidable limestone cliffs only broken in a few places where small streams meet the sea. The "cwms" through which these streams flow add diversity and interest to the landscape.

The communities of Monknash and Marcross comprise a relatively treeless plateau.

The strong horizontal accents of this plateau are reflected in the character of the buildings which are low roofed and huddled into hedges and lanes sheltering from the prevailing westerly winds. The treeless nature of the landscape is related to the destructive effect of salt laden winds and the need to convert all land to agricultural use.

St. Donats however, while also situated on the Vale of Glamorgan plateau, has a much greater tree cover, related particularly to the cwms within the area, particularly St. Donats Castle and an important belt on the coast road from Llantwit Major to St. Donats.

Agriculture is the predominant activity within the communities. Mixed farming predominates, but there is a bias towards arable farming in this area of the Vale of Glamorgan Coast .

The communities contain some of the best agricultural land in Wales related to the moist mild climate and rich well drained soil. The coastline of these communities are included within the nationally recognised Glamorgan Heritage Coast which stretches from Aberthaw to Porthcawl.

The community area of Marcross has an area of 918 acres. The village straggles for almost a mile along a lane. Until the present century, Marcross was a small community of tenant farmers, their labourers and a few craftsmen. At the turn of the century most of the land in the parish belonged to four large estates: Llantrithyd, Wimborne, St. Donats and Eweny Priory. This is no longer the case. The parish church is dedicated to the Holy Trinity and contains some interesting features. The two lighthouses erected at Nash Point 300 yards apart, were alighted so that only one light would be visible to ships on a true course. This was after the coast had witnessed many shipwrecks. Because of improved maritime technology only one lighthouse is now in operational use.

The community area of Monknash is 1425 acres in extent. The name of the parish indicates that in its history it once belonged to a monastery. It appears that what was then called Alissa or Essa & was part of Richard de Granvilles endowment of the Abbey which he found at Neath in 1129. When it was a grange of Neath Abbey it was probably a large and prosperous farm indicated by the remains of the buildings. It seems by the end of the 16th century the monks were only tenants at will on the manor.

The community area of St. Donats is approximately 941 acres. The community has a long tradition of christian worship. Until the coming of the Normans, the church was dedicated to St. Gweryd. However, the invaders disliked the celtic association and changed the dedication to that of St. Donats (patron saint of storm tossed sailors). The close proximity of the church and castle is a typical Norman feature and can be found in other locations in the county. St. Donats castle stands on the eastern bank of a deep ravine in the lias rock, the ravine terminating lower down by the seashore in a little sheltered cove. It is the earliest military building in the county that hasn't undergone substantial material alteration.

In the earliest requisition extent of the lordship of Glamorgan taken in 1262, Hawey is put down as the holder of St. Donats and he probably was the builder of the first castle. Sir William Esterling of Flemish descent was the first of his family to own the lordship; in the course of the century the name became known as Stradling. From the time of the first knight the lordship descended through an almost unbroken line from father to son for 23 generations.

There is a strong possibility that there was a church on the site of the present church going back to Roman times. Tradition has it that Caractacus, who defied the Roman invaders, had his stronghold at St. Donats and that his daughter brought back christianity on her return from Rome where her father was prisoner and where she met St. Paul. The community area of St. Donats comprised the manor of St. Donats and some property of the Knights Hospitallers, hence the farm called Splott.

The three community areas today contain a rich historical heritage which is contained in a landscape ranging from steep limestone cliffs and secluded cwms to the efficient agricultural landscape of the Vale of Glamorgan plain. It is these characteristics of the communities that the County Treasures survey has attempted to highlight.

MA1 NASH POINT CAMP (3)
Iron Age promontory fort with banks and ditches. It has a fine example of an inturned entrance. The defences are well preserved on the north side.

Ancient Monument

SS 915684

MA2 CHURCH OF THE HOLY TRINITY (8.3)
12, 13, 14th Century. Nave, chancel, south porch, unbuttressed west tower with saddleback roof, single plain bell chamber openings. Original trefoiled single lancets to chancel. Norman south door, Norman chancel arch and large tub font.

Listed Building
Grade B

SS 922692

MA3 NASH LIGHTHOUSE (18.2)
Circa 1832. Tapering straight sided tower. Adjoining flat roof single-storey building, cornice and blocking course, storey casement windows. This lighthouse was taken out of operational use with the improvement of navigational equipment on shipping.



SS 918681

MA4 LLAN FARM (10.3)
C1780? Formerly thatched. Fireplace sited so that it stands between the hall and passage creating the outside cross passage. This was the commonest plan form found in the early Vale houses.



SS 928695

DESCRIPTION

PROTECTION

GRID REFERENCE

MA5 MARCROSS VILLAGE

(11.6)

A good example of a ribbon development. The highway clearly existed before the settlement and the later habitations merely emphasised the line of the road.

SS 9269

MA6 MARCROSS BROOK, NASH POINT

(21.2)

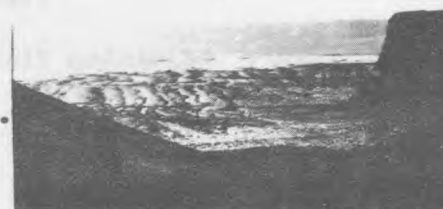
The brook, which must have been much larger in earlier times, has succeeded in keeping the valley floor down to sea level as the coast recedes. There are good examples of meander features and a marked terrace - a surviving fragment of a former higher floor to the valley.

SS 915685

MA7 COASTAL FEATURES, MARCROSS

(21.2)

Immediately below the old lighthouse, a remarkably unbroken shore begins. This is the most extensive area formed by a single limestone bed anywhere along the South Glamorgan coast. With the adjacent cliffs it reveals examples of wave cut platforms, and other excellent examples of sea erosion.



SS 919679

MA8 NASH LIGHTHOUSE MEADOW

(21.3)

Small unploughed limestone pasture lightly grazed and used for hay production. Contains *Cirsium tuberosum* (Tuberous Thistle) which is nationally rare.

Site of Special
Scientific Interest

SS 9268

DESCRIPTION	PROTECTION	GRID REFERENCE
<p>MA9 <u>MEDIAEVAL EARTHWORKS</u> (9.1)</p> <p>Certainly the remains of a deserted village. The area is one of disturbed ground with many spread banks formerly rectilinear enclosures.</p>		SS 92656946
<p>MA10 <u>ROUND BARROW</u> (2)</p> <p>Bronze Age round barrow, 17.4 m. in diameter.</p>		SS 93287099
<p>MA11 <u>PILLOW MOUNDS</u> (7)</p> <p>Two pillow mounds which have been dated to the late mediaeval period and are thought to be artificial rabbit warrens.</p>		SS 9148 6849 SS 9155 6842
<p>MA12 <u>CAEREGLWYS LONG CAIRN</u> (7)</p> <p>Known locally as Hen Eglwys (Old Church). The site was described in 1811 as an "ancient cromlech, which according to tradition was anciently the place of worship belonging to the village." It is an oval stoney mound, about 50 m. x 15 m. and has been damaged by the digging of a trench. When the Chambered tomb was robbed.</p>		SS 9169 6824

DESCRIPTION

	DESCRIPTION	PROTECTION	GR
MA 13	<p><u>MARCROSS CASTLE</u> (9.3)</p> <p>Surrounding Macross farmyard and buildings is a rectangular, enclosure 150ft. x 180ft. with the remains of a tower on the south angle. Between the south and west angle is a unbroken line of mediaeval walling still standing up to 18ft. high. A cowshed with strongly battered walls has in the north east gable two blocked cross oilletes.</p>		SS

MONKNASH
DESCRIPTION

PROTECTION

GRID REFERENCE

M1	<u>ROUNDBARROWS NORTH EAST OF CHURCH FROM MONKNASH</u> (2)		
	Two roundbarrows about 20 yds. in diameter.	Ancient Monument	SS 922707
M2	<u>ROUNDBARROW WEST OF CANT ERW FARM, MONKNASH</u> (2)		
	Three large round barrows about 30 yds. in diameter.	Ancient Monument	SS 935713
M3	<u>REMAINS OF MONASTIC GRANGE</u> (8.2)		
	Ruins of the Barn, Dovecote and remains of other monastic buildings.	Listed Building Grade II	SS 918706
	Remains of groups of buildings forming the grange of Neath Abbey. The C13 tythe barn must have been exceptionally fine, having been 240 ft. in length and having two large porches on the east one of which is now converted into a cottage.	Ancient Monument	
M4	<u>CHURCH OF ST. MARY</u> (8.3)		
	Small Church of Norman origin. Nave, chancel, south porch, crude stone bellcote at west end. Norman features include chancel arch and round-headed window with torus moulding to north wall of chancel. Other windows are 16-17 Century Tudor.		SS 922705



DESCRIPTION

PROTECTION

GR

M5 NASH POINT ROUND BARROWS, MONKNASH

(2)

Several roundbarrows.

Ancient Monument

SS

M6 BARROWS, SOUTH OF MONKTON EAST FARM

(2)

Three roundbarrows.

Ancient Monument

SS

M7 WINDMILL TOWER

(12.5)

Old stone windmill tower situated at the rear of Church Farm.
Disused.

SS

M8 CLAWDD-Y-MYNACH

(10.3)

Late C16 Farmhouse, modernised.



SS

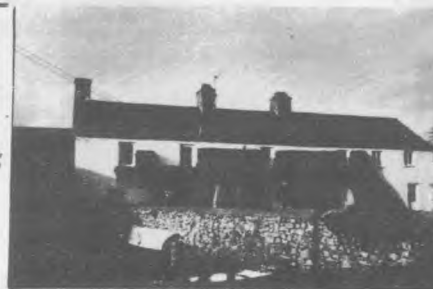
9 PLOUGH AND HARROW INN (10.3)

Probably of mediaeval origin and may embody parts of former monastic buildings. Much altered. Rough cast, slate roof, eaves end gables, three stone stacks, two-storey. Interior shows stop moulded ceiling beams and chamfered flat pointed stone doorframe, and chamfered Tudor arched stone doorway to the fireside stone stairs. Altered in the 17th century into a typical Vale house.

SS 919706

10 CHURCH FARM HOUSE (10.3)

A 16th Century house with external fenestration of the 18th century. Rendered, slate roof, 3 square stacks. Two-storey 6 windows, sashes in exposed frames, mostly with glazing bars. Plain door under later gabled porch. Internally the hall retains its fine oak beamed ceiling, one beam being roll moulded and, at the side of the central fireplace, a winding stone stair.



SS 920706

11 MONKNASH COAST (21.3)

Exhibits both geological and botanical features. The cliffs show folded carboniferous limestone strata overlain unconformably by the littoral facies of the lower lias. A narrow ungrazed cliff top area of rough grass and scrub includes several hay meadows supporting interesting plant communities.

Site of Special
Scientific Interest

SS 908696

12 FFYNNON FAIR (11.2)

Holy spring dedicated to St. Mary.

SS 90637011

M13 ROUND BARROW

(2)

Bronze Age round barrow about 20m in diameter.

M14 ROMANO - BRITISH VILLA (site of)

(4)

Ancient Monument

M15 WEST MONKTON

(10.3)



A house of the early 18th century which incorporates walling and beams of the 17th century.

M16 EAST MONKTON

(10.3)

To the south of the present farmhouse range is the main hall unit of a 17th century house having a beamed ceiling and at the side of the main fireplace a baffle entrance and a winding stone doorway with part of the original stone doorway.



S5	<u>BARRACKS, ST. DONATS CASTLE</u>	(10.4)	A range of stone buildings, date and purpose uncertain, possibly C17.	Listed Building Grade II	SS 935677
S6	<u>WATCHTOWER, ST. DONATS CASTLE</u>	(9.5)	Situated on a wooded slope, to the west of the Castle. Erected as a lookout by Sir Harry Stradling.	Listed Building Grade II	SS 933681
S7	<u>TITHE BARN, ST. DONATS CASTLE</u>	(10.3)	Mediaeval stone, tithe barn, tastefully restored and in excellent condition. The unusual roof is formed on upper cruck trusses. It is a theatre and meeting place and centrepiece of St. Donat's Arts Centre.	 Listed Building Grade II	SS 935682
S8	<u>POST BOX</u>	(10.5)	Victorian wall mounted post box still in use.		SS 936685

DESCRIPTION

PROTECTION

GRID REFERENCE

S9

ST. DONATS VILLAGE

(11.6)

The Old Village is an example of a compact village layout of Vale of Glamorgan plain, in comparison to the characteristic dispersed settlement pattern in the upland areas. The village form emerged in response to the collective needs of arable farming indicative of Lowland Britain. Note the common practice of siting the house end onto the street.

SS 9368

S10

CHURCH OF ST. DONATS AND CASTLE

(19.4)

The church in close proximity to the castle is a typical Norman arrangement and reflects the Norman influence of the South Glamorgan plain.

SS 934682

S11

ROUND BARROWS

(2)

Two Bronze Age Round Barrows. These mounds are much smaller than the average Bronze Age Barrows of the district.

SS 93786961
SS 93906960

S13

OLD FORGE

(10.3)

A 19th century house with gable entry and stone stairway besides the main fireplace.
A forge was attached in the upper end and a parlour at the lower end around 1700.



SS 9358 6856

DESCRIPTION

PROTECTION

GRID

S5

S12 CALVARY ST. DONATS CHURCHYARD

(8.5)

S6

A most interesting and uncommon feature of the mediaeval period. The Calvary was erected towards the end of the C15. It is situated on the south side of the churchyard and depicts on the west side the crucifixion, with St. Mary and St. John, on the east side Our Lady enthroned, with her child in her arms. On the knop below the figures there seem to have been brackets for holding some form of illumination during festivals. The fact that it remained intact during the Puritan rebellion is even more remarkable, considering that Cromwell is said to have visited St. Donats Castle. A tradition describes that when Cromwell appeared before the castle Lady Straddling had recently given birth to a son. On her appearance in one of the windows with her son, Cromwell ordered the siege to be raised. In corroboration of this is the fact that every other cross in the community was destroyed.



ANCIENT MONUMENT

S5

S7

S14 OLD RECTORY

(10.3)

The remains of a three unit Rectory house of circa 1500. The central room has a lateral chimney with dressed stone surrounds. The south parlour with gable chimney and dressed stone windows is connected to the upper chamber by a lateral stone stair built in a projection which houses a latrine to the chamber above the parlour. These rooms are entered by dressed stone doorways.

SS

S8

S15 LEGEND OF THE CROSS OF ST. DONATS

(20.2)

In 1559 the trunk of an ash tree was snapped off in a storm in the churchyard of St. Donats. On the fractured tree was seen the figure of a cross on one half and the impression on the other. A commission was appointed to enquire into the invention of a cross. The tree was cut off and sent to the Privy Council. It was adjudged Sir Thomas Stradling made the images and was fined 1,000 marks. The tree was kept in London but is now lost.

SS

682

681

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679

678

S14

S3

S6

St Donat's (St Dwynid) Church
(C 11th)

S2

S12

S3

S4

S5

St Donat's Castle
(United World College of the Atlantic)

B M 43.31m

43.0m

Car Park

38.1m

Tennis Courts

Barracks Wood

6393

13.001ha

32.13

St Donat's Castle
(United World College of the Atlantic)

B M 15.64m

21.9m

Cavalry Barracks
(remains of)

Swimming Pool

West Wood

Sand & Shingle

Rock & Shingle

St Donat's Bay

933

934

935

936

Low Water

B



