

SUPPOSED CASTLES IN GLAMORGAN: A REVIEW

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INTRODUCTION

During the preparation of RCAHMW's *Inventory* of the castles of Glamorgan, 71 sites were rejected as castles, although they have been regarded as such by various authors, some of them since the 16th century. Many have proved to be natural features or buildings of no relevant interest. Others, while not castles, constituted sites of interest appropriate to inclusion in other volumes of the *Glamorgan Inventory*, and a few were reputed castles because of a misinterpretation of documentary sources, or a mistaken belief in the significance of 'castle' or 'castell' in their names. It was decided to omit this review from Volume III, part 1b of the *Inventory* for reasons of space and cost, but it is presented here because of its value to future researchers in Glamorgan who might be led to consider the sites in question. The paper has been edited for publication by D M Browne and Professor R A Griffiths.

Of the rejected castles, 28 have already been reclassified and included in previous volumes of the *Glamorgan Inventory*. 11 earthworks were accepted as works of the early iron age (RCAHMW 1976, part 2), while six earthworks were deemed to be medieval, five being classed as moated sites and one as a strongly-sited homestead (RCAHMW 1982, part 2). Of the supposed masonry castles, 11 were unfortified houses of architectural significance, six of them medieval (RCAHMW 1982, part 2), and five 16th-century and later (RCAHMW 1981 and 1988).

Sites are treated in alphabetical order with alternative names inserted with cross-references. The nature of each site is stated, with minimal description when reference can be made to a full description in a RCAHMW *Inventory*. The characteristics and documentary authorities which led to their mistaken identification as castles are noticed, and in most cases their true nature and approximate date of construction are given. In many cases, sites were first claimed to be castles by Leland, Merrick, and George Owen in the 16th century.

The 33 alleged earthwork castles comprise ten supposed mottes and 23 supposed castle-ringworks or small enclosure castles. 30 others have been regarded as masonry castles. The remaining eight sites comprise one alleged walled town and seven reputed castles of unknown type discounted for a variety of reasons.

The ten 'mottes' include three which are purely natural mounds, probably of glacial origin: Council Tut, Penrice, and Tongwynlais. Leason is a rocky outcrop,

its crude partial ditch and quarry-holes probably related to adjacent limekilns. Maes Hywaid is a grassgrown manure heap, and Nash Mound, scheduled as a barrow in 1953, is composed of builders' rubble. A coal tip at Ynysawdre has been mistaken for a motte, as has Twyn Llywelyn, Aberthaw, which is regarded as a navigational feature at a harbour entrance. The vanished Swansea Mount has been shown to have been a post-medieval outwork fronting a town gate. A mound at Llansamlet remains unclassified, but is certainly not a motte.

Rejected castle-ringworks include the 11 accepted as works of the early iron age. Two of these iron-age works are of particular interest as sites named as castles in medieval charters. In both cases, they were thus named as prominent topographical features conveniently marking points on the bounds of lands being granted. The first, Kibor Castle, figures in separate charters as castellum Kibur and Castelstude. The Old Castle of another charter is the iron-age promontory fort on Nash Point, Marcross. Both these ancient sites had been recognised in the middle ages as former fortifications, and their medieval designation as castles has prompted some confusion in castle studies. Five other earthworks are classed as moated sites and were described in RCAHMW 1982. The remainder of the rejected castle-ringworks comprise a strongly-sited homestead, an enclosed homestead, a tree-ring, field banks on a spur, two unclassified sites, and one vanished site for which there is no valid information.

The 30 alleged masonry castles include seven medieval domestic buildings. Four of these are the substantial unfortified houses of Alltygawrddu, Caer Dynnaf, Castellmynach, and East Orchard Castle, which along with Cwrt-y-Vil Castle, actually a grange, are described in RCAHMW 1981. Two lesser medieval domestic sites are also rejected as castles: Barraston, and Biglis Old Court. A further 15 rejected masonry castles are post-medieval houses or mansions ranging from undistinguished farmhouses like Beauville Castle, Brocastle, Castell Madog, Moulton Castle, Ruthin Castle, and Stormy Castle, to impressive mansions such as Boverton Place and Cefnabli. Others include the Tudor and Jacobean house of Flemingston Court, Llanddewi Castle Farm, Penmark Place, the vanished Rhose Castle, and Wallston Castle, the 19th-century Glyn Castle, and the complex earthworks and foundations of West Orchard Castle.

Three self-evidently post-medieval 'castles' have been included because of their names and their interesting castellated form; being in ruins, they may become deceptive monuments. Ivy Tower is a neo-Gothic folly of c 1800; Morris Castle is an impressive

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castellated tower-block raised by an industrialist in the mid 18th century to accommodate his colliers and their families; Rhiwperra Castle is a large castellated mansion with great drum towers at its angles, raised in 1626.

Crege Castle, first noticed by Leland and alluded to by most subsequent antiquaries, has not been certainly identified, although it is suggested that it might be the site at Creigiau.

Porthkerry Castle and Silverwood Castle are the most unlikely masonry 'castles', both lying off-shore and only rarely observed at exceptionally low tides. Porthkerry has figured persistently in castle lists since the 16th century. Silverwood was first reported in the mid 19th century. Both are substantial masonry structures which may be explained as oyster tanks or fish-traps.

Breigan Castle in Llansannon is an undistinguished farmhouse of late date, but it merits extended notes to explain its name. A castle of that name was reputedly raised by Stephen Bauzan, who held Llansannon in the mid 13th century. Gelli Garn Castle, an adjacent site, is also claimed as Bauzan's castle, but must be rejected too.

Mistaken or highly suspect traditions account for the remaining rejected sites. Cowbridge Castle occurs in the records between 1492 and 1550, but it never existed. There was no castle in Cowbridge town, and the scribes at that period applied the name to nearby Llanblethian Castle because its constable served as mayor of the town.

The Llangenau castle recorded in 1257, and wrongly identified as Llangennith, was in fact Llangynwyd Castle (RCAHMW 1991, MR 2). Archdeacon's Castle and King's Castle are now vanished, but both appear to have been domestic buildings. Nicholaston Castle and Scurlage Castle are listed as castles only once, in a charter of 1459, and though they are listed by later antiquaries, no castle vestiges are known and none has been reliably recorded. Llantwit Major Tower was probably no more than a ruined windmill, now vanished, and it cannot be accepted that Aberafan was ever a walled town.

ABERAFAN 'TOWN WALLS', Aberavon (SS 7622 9012)

Ordinances of the borough of Afan, dated 1643, provide a late and improbable reference to 'the Town walls there': 'Item: And it is further agreed that if anie person or p'sons doe keepe anie kine or pigges without yeocke and ringes or otherwise doe fould anie sheepe or goats within the Town walls there then such person or p'sons so offending shall forfeit for everie default and to bee estreted as afforesaid'. The borough's historian, A Leslie Evans, was unable to cite any other record or tradition relating to such walls, and suggested that the ordinance may have been referring to the town's limits defined by ditches or hedges (Evans 1971, 23-4).

Afan was the only medieval borough founded in Glamorgan by a Welsh lord, Leision ap Morgan Fychan (1283-1314). His charter of liberties, c 1302, granted its burgesses the privileges enjoyed in the nearby borough

of the chief lords at Kenfig (Clark 1910, III (dcccxi), 922-3). The lordship and borough of Afan came into the possession of Edward, Lord Despenser, in an exchange made between 1359 and 1373. Like Kenfig, Afan borough suffered from sand encroachment and flooding in the 15th century, and it presented the appearance of a poor village when seen by Leland in the 1530s (Pugh 1971, 341, 359; Corbett 1925, 46).

The last vestiges of Aberafan Castle beside the parish church of St Mary were levelled between 1876 and 1897 (RCAHMW 1991, VE 1). The site of castle and borough were entirely built over and form part of the greater Port Talbot conurbation.

ALLTYGAWRDDU, Llantrisant (ST 0562 8086)

The courtyard house of Alltygawrddu was in ruin as early as the 1530s when Leland stated that 'ther hath been sum auncient place at Galthe Caurde a mile by southe from Llantrissent'. Iolo Morganwg variously listed the remains as a castle and as a former religious house, the latter interpretation having prompted its designation as 'St Cawrdaf's Monastery' on some OS maps. Neither of his interpretations may be sustained. The vestiges occupy a prominent site on a limestone ridge, but they indicate no more than a purely domestic site. A hall with flanking cross-wings formed three sides of an enclosed court. Alltygawrddu was fully described and illustrated in RCAHMW 1982, MH 14.

ARCHDEACON'S CASTLE, Llandaf (ST 1552 7823)

John Speed's plan of Llandaf, 1610, depicted at this site two substantial buildings set close together at right angles, one a roofless shell. They stood on the flood plain beside the river Taff, c 100m north of the west end of the cathedral and within the angle of an enclosure set against the river. As the reputed vestiges of the castle of the archdeacons of Llandaf, these remains were noticed in 1717 by W Wotton, whose description was quoted by Browne Willis in 1719: 'Towards the North-West of the Church, opposite to Jasper's Tower, in a Field call'd Llan-y-wrach, at about forty six Yards Distance, there is a ruin'd Piece of Building, under the Brow of a Hill, forty-eight Yards in Length, and twenty Yards broad. It then appears to have been built in the Form of a Castle, and is said to have belong'd anciently to the Archdeacon of Llandaff ... The Archidiaconal Castle was demolish'd by Owen Glynwrdwy, at the same Time when he burnt the Bishop's Castle' (Willis 1719, 32-3).

No traces of any buildings are visible, but distinctive parchmarks are claimed to have been observed during a recent drought (David 1990). Following Willis, the tradition of the Archdeacon's Castle and its dubious destruction by Owain Glyndwr has persisted, but without the disclosure of any further information regarding the former ruins, or of any relevant documentary evidence (Anon 1847, 81; Fishbourne 1883, 11; Halliday 1902, 234-5). One authority claimed that a small part of the ancient buildings was still in use as a cowshed until c 1855 (Waldron 1895, 18).

was made in 1290 for the celebration of masses for his soul (Griffiths 1978, 148, n 56; Cal Chart R, ii, 345).

Although Breigam Farm and Gelli Garn 'Castle' must be rejected as Bauzan's reputed Breigan Castle, and no other possible site has been identified in the vicinity, the tradition of such a castle is credible, and Bauzan's undoubted connections with Llansannor are worthy of notice. He held one and a half fees in Pembroke under Earl Richard Marshal, and was prominent in the retinue of Marshal during his rebellion of 1233-4 (Walker 1994, 57). Stephen Bauzan remained in Glamorgan after the peace settlement in 1234, along with Richard Siward who contrived to retain the St Quintin lordships of Llanblethian and Talyfan. Stephen earned favour with Earl Richard de Clare, serving as sheriff in 1246-7 (Clark 1910, II, 521, 533, 535, 543 and III, 1148; Davies 1946/8, II (L 437), 727). A party to the earl's expulsion of Richard Siward from Llanblethian and Talyfan in 1245, he appeared as a witness in the pleas made before the king in 1248 concerning that dispute (Clark 1910, II (dxxxv), 551-3). The case was aborted on Siward's death, and Earl Richard retained Llanblethian and Talyfan as demesne lordships, granting the sub-lordship of Llansannor and Breigan (or Brigam) in northern Talyfan to Stephen Bauzan (Clark 1910, II, 559; Merrick 1983, 65; Lewis 1954, 140, n 5; Nicholl 1936, 21, 136). Bauzan's lordship comprised the parish of Llansannor, including Breigan in its northern part, and the contiguous parish of Llanharry to the north-east, where he sub-ensfeoffed his follower, William Scurlage, at Trecastle (SH 4).

Stephen's heir was his brother Richard, who in that capacity quitclaimed lands Stephen had held in Cardigan (Edwards 1940, no 64, 43-4). Richard Bauzan is not recorded in Llansannor, and the subsequent descent of the sub-lordship can only be gleaned from detailed but contradictory Elizabethan and later pedigrees, which cannot be verified in any documentary records before the 16th century (Merrick 1983, 65; Lewis 1954, 133, 140-1; Clark 1886, 270-1, 364; Francis 1974, 12-26). Apparently ignorant of Richard Bauzan, the pedigrees claim that Llansannor passed to his son Thomas. Despite this demonstrably inaccurate start, they all infer early descent through several heiresses, before two daughters and co-heiresses of Jenkin fitz Aron Thomas of Breigan and Llansannor each carried one of the divisions of the sub-lordship in marriage. From this partition, probably c 1400, stemmed the Gwyns of Llansannor and the Thomases of Breigan, who are well attested in the 16th century. The fine early 16th-century and later house of the Gwyns survives at Llansannor (RCAHMW 1981, no 16). In the 1590s, John Thomas held 'Brigan wherein standeth his cheefe house' (Lewis 1954, 141). The identification of that house might also disclose a strong house or castle of Stephen Bauzan.

BROCASTLE, Ewenny (SS 9362 7719)

Brocastle is a house which lies close to the north side of the A48, the medieval Portway, and on the west

side of the Brocastle brook which divides Ewenny parish from the parish of Colwinston. Brocastle Farm lies in the latter parish, 120m to the east, on the other side of the brook at SS 9378 7716. Also in Colwinston, c 1km east-south-east of Brocastle at SS 9462 7691, is the late medieval Brocastle Barn (RCAHMW 1988, 532-550). The prefix 'Bro' alludes to the location of these places in the Vale of Glamorgan (Bro Morgannwg). No documentary evidence justifies the suffix, and no vestiges of earthworks or masonry are discernible at Brocastle, or at the site of that name in Colwinston, to suggest the former existence of a castle. The name alone probably explains why Iolo Morganwg included Brocastle in his list of Glamorgan castles in 1800, and others have perpetuated the tradition (Morganwg).

The name is not a recent antiquarian invention. Brocastle was certainly a small mesne-manor held of Ogmore (Clark 1877, 263). It has been suggested that it constituted a sub-fee held from the early 12th century by the de Reigny family, who were followers of the de Londres lords of Ogmore, attesting many of their charters (Nicholl 1936, 79, 84, 99, 125-6, 156). There was a mesne tenancy held by knight service at an early date in Colwinston, where two Brocastle place-names have been noticed (Pugh 1971, 289). Jankyn Thomas appears as the first certain tenant of Brocastle in the 15th century, holding 250 acres there and serving as the farmer of Ogmore lordship (Pugh 1971, 307). Jankyn is said to have been of the family of Sir William ap Thomas of Raglan (ob 1445), and in 1546, his descendant, James Thomas, held the manor of Brocastle 'by Knights service and castle guard of Ogmore' under the duchy of Lancaster (Cardiff Lib, fols 135-7).

CAER DYNNAF (Llygod), Llanblethian (SS 9852 7427)

The remains of the supposed castle on Llanblethian Hill, c 1km south-west of Cowbridge, lie within Caer Dynnaf, a large multivallate hillfort of the iron age, at c 85m OD (RCAHMW 1976, pt 2, no 670). At the east end of the hillfort, an annexe is isolated by a cross-bank and ditch. In medieval times, the northern third of this annexe was isolated by another cross-bank, and a substantial masonry building was raised within the resulting enclosure. The structure, together with the more impressive iron-age earthworks, probably established the tradition of a castle on the hill, which may be identified with the 'Llygod Castle' listed by Rice Merrick (c 1580), George Owen (c 1600), and Iolo Morganwg (1800) (Merrick 1983, 76, 137; Owen, 1906, 99-100; Morganwg). As 'Llanblethian Hill', it was also included as a castle distinct from the nearby Llanblethian Castle in the list compiled by 'Antiquarius' (1785, 936). Even G T Clark interpreted the masonry structure within the hillfort as the remnants of 'a square tower or castellet of some kind', though could offer no documentary authority for it (Clark 1878, 15). The engraving of Llanblethian Castle made by the Buck

brothers in 1741 propagated the myth of Llygod Castle, portraying it in the background as an impressive masonry structure.

The structure within the annexe is medieval, but clearly of a domestic nature. Its vestiges define a trapezoidal building measuring 16.5m by 9.75m, with walls 1.2m thick surviving up to 3.7m in height. The absence of windows on the ground floor suggests that the building had been a first-floor hall (RCAHMW 1982, MH 23).

CANTON CASTLE, see **KING'S CASTLE**

CASTELL COCH (Castell y Marchog: Castell Sion Goodfellow), Welsh St Donat's (ST 0271 7478)

Despite its various names, Castell Coch, 1.4km south of the village of Welsh St Donat's, is the site of a medieval homestead set on a low spur between two valleys. Its situation probably prompted its misinterpretation as a castle. The site has been described and illustrated in RCAHMW 1982, LH 47, fig 26). Iolo Morganwg included it in his list of Glamorgan Castles, naming it Castell y Marchog (Knight's Castle) or Castell Sion Goodfellow, claiming Sion Goodfellow was Owain Glyndwr (Morganwg; Hopkins 1961, 26). In 1785, a list of Glamorgan castles by 'Antiquarius' (1785, 936) had included 'Castell y Marchog, where it is said Glendower retired, and lived the life of a hermit under the name of John Goodfellow, and where he died'. Local tradition still claims that Glyndwr defeated a royal army in 1405 on Stalling Down on the east side of Cowbridge, only 1km to the west of Castell Coch (Evans 1943, 238).

CASTELL MADOG, Merthyr Tudful (SO 0640 0951)

Castell Madog or Madoc's Castle was the former name of the present Garth Farm near Pant-Cadivor, c 3.5km north-east of the centre of Merthyr Tudful. The site was presumed to be that of a fortified manor house or castle by William Rees, and it is marked as such on the old OS 1:10,560 quarter sheet (Rees 1932, SE sheet). There is a brief reference to a castle here in 1867 (Wilkins 1867, 26). Garth Farm is a recent building, with sash windows and for the most part cement rendered. Neither the farmhouse nor the buildings adjacent contain any early fabric, and there is no trace of any earthworks or other vestiges there or in the surrounding fields which might indicate a former castle.

CASTELL MORLAIS, Sker (SS 8029 7826)

A record map in the Royal Commission's archives marks a semicircular earthwork set against the cliff-top c 2km north-west of Porthcawl and 220m south-west of The Rest convalescent home. Marked by hand, the site is annotated 'Castell Morlais 1813', but no further information could be discovered concerning it, and it was not identified on the ground. There is no manorial context to suggest that there may ever have been a medieval castle in this location.

CASTELL SION GOODFELLOW, CASTELL Y MARCHOG, see **CASTELL COCH**

CASTELLYMYNACH, Pen-tyrch (ST 0821 8105)

Castellmynach is a large and impressive late medieval hall-house of the Mathew family. Despite its name (meaning Monk's Castle), it was never other than a domestic residence of high status. It has been fully described and illustrated in RCAHMW 1982, MH 9.

CEFNMABLI, Michaelstone-y-fedw (ST 2235 8405)

Tradition relates that this fine mansion, later a hospital and now a ruin, burnt down a few years ago, derived its name from Mabel, daughter of Fitzhamon, who is said to have had a hunting lodge here. The legend may be discounted, as may also be the claims that it was a castle. It was certainly the seat of the Kemeys family from the 14th century, but the house has no fabric earlier than the 16th century. It has been described and illustrated in RCAHMW 1981, no 15.

CLUN-Y-CASTELL, see **GLYN CASTLE**

COUNCIL TUT, Llanblethian (SS 9940 7453)

Council Tut is a low spread mound c 15m in diameter rising no more than 0.6m above the valley floor south of Cowbridge church and outside the line of the town wall. It is entirely natural, and suggestions that it indicates a former motte may be discounted (Hemp 1923, 175-6; Hopkin-James 1992, 131-3).

COWBRIDGE CASTLE, Llanblethian (SS 9940 7460)

The 'Cowbridge Castle' which appears late in the medieval records and figures 11 times in them between 1492 and 1550 refers to the nearby Llanblethian Castle. All the records concern the office of constable of Llanblethian Castle, and the fact that he also served as mayor of Cowbridge explains the adoption of this late name for that ancient castle. There is no evidence that a castle ever existed in the town.

CRAIG TY ISAF, Baglan (SS 7565 9338)

This small but strongly-embanked promontory fort of the early iron age, in its final form, displays similarities with the multivallate Norman castle-ringwork at Dinas Powys (RCAHMW 1991, CR 7). It is described and illustrated in RCAHMW 1976, pt 2, no 678. Its remote and elevated position on the south-west side of Mynydd y Gaer at c 210m OD, 1km north of Baglan, makes it unlikely that it was re-occupied as an early castle.

CRAWLEY ROCKS FORT, Nicholaston (SS 5188 8796)

Crawley Rocks Fort is an iron-age promontory fort at c 60m OD overlooking Nicholaston Burrows on the south Gower coast. The small area enclosed and the strong bivallate defences isolating the promontory have been compared with those of the Norman multivallate