

**Site Name:** CILGERRAN CASTLE.

**Site File Ref. No.:** CILG/CAST

**Site Type:** Stone Castle

**N. G. Ref.:** SN 1946 4312

**Period:** Medieval; Post-Medieval; Modern

**History:**

A castle was said to have been built at "Cenarth Bychan", probably this site, by Gerald de Windsor, the Earl of Pembroke, in 1108:

*"...and he fortified it with ditches and walls and thought to place there for safe keeping his wife and sons and his wealth and all his valuables..."* (Brut y Tywysogion)

*"...and he took thither all his valuables and his wife and children, and he made a dyke and palisade around that place and a gate with a lock upon it..."* (Brenhinedd y Saesson)

Although the site of 'Cenarth Bychan' is still disputed, it seems likely that the Norman acquisition of Cemais in about 1108 would make it logical for the Welsh-Norman frontier to have been re-established at the Teifi estuary at that time. Gerald de Windsor was the son of William fitz Otho, and was probably born in Windsor in or about the year 1075. He defended Pembroke against the Welsh in 1094, and was made the Constable of Pembroke in about 1102. He extended the Pembrokeshire territories over the next few years, reaching the Teifi in about 1108. In 1109 Owain ap Cadwgan abducted Gerald de Windsor's wife Nest from the castle. He climbed over the castle wall with a company of about fourteen men and set fire to the wooden buildings. He was Nest's second cousin – the son of Cadwgan ap Bleddyn, the Lord of Ceredigion. As a young girl Princess Nest, a daughter of Rhys ap Tewdwr – the Prince of Deheubarth until his death in 1093 – had spent a period at the English royal court, during which time she had borne a child by Prince Henry, later King Henry I, before being married off to Gerald De Windsor, the Earl of Pembroke. On the occasion of Owain's raid, Gerald de Windsor escaped at Nest's insistence by means of the privies.

*"...Cadwgan ap Bleddyn prepared a royal feast for the leading men of his land, and he invited Owain, his son, from Powys to the feast. And he held that feast at Christmas in honour of Jesus Christ. And when the feast was ended, Owain heard that Nest, daughter of the Lord Rhys ap Tewdwr, wife of Gerald the officer, was in the said castle. And when he heard, he went, and with him a small force to visit her as though she were a kinswoman – and so she was, for Cadwgan ap Bleddyn and Gwladus, daughter of Rhiwallon, who was mother to Nest, were first cousins; for Bleddyn and Rhiwallon were brothers, sons of Cynfyn by Angharad, daughter of King Maredudd. And after that, at the instigation of the Devil, he was moved by passion and love for the woman, and with a small company with him, about fourteen men – he made for the castle by night. And unknown to the watchers, he came into the castle over the wall and the ditch and surrounded the building where Gerald and Nest, his wife, were sleeping. And he raised a shout around the building and set fire to the buildings and kindled them. And Gerald awoke from his slumber and was afraid when he heard the shout, and knew not what he should do. And his wife said to him, "Go not to the door, for there are thine enemies around it, but come with me". And thus he did. And she led him to the privies which adjoined the building. And through the pit of the privies he escaped. And when Nest knew for certain that he had escaped, she shouted from within and said "Why do you shout in vain? He whom you were seeking has escaped". And then they came inside, and searched for him everywhere. And when they did not find him, they seized Nest and her two sons and a third son, whom Gerald had by a concubine, and a daughter. And they utterly pillaged the castle and burned it. And he violated Nest and lay with her and then returned home..."*

Gerald de Windsor got his revenge when he killed Owain in 1116, but he himself died soon afterwards, and the castle passed to his son, William fitz Gerald. Nest later married Stephen de Mareis, the

castellan of Cardigan. It seems that the castle survived and remained in the hands of Gerald's descendants for the next fifty years.

In 1165 the castle of Cilgerran was captured from the FitzWindsors (William FitzGerald) by Lord Rhys ap Gruffydd, who imprisoned Robert fitz Stephen, the son of Stephen de Mareis and Nest and the former Constable of Cardigan Castle, there for the next four years. Rhys was the Prince of Deheubarth and had seized full control of his lands from the English that year. In 1166 the garrison of Pembroke attacked Cilgerran castle twice, but failed to capture it. The following account appears in the '*Brut*':

*"...The ensuing year, the French from Pembroke and the Flemings came to make a powerful attack upon the castle of Cilgerran; and after many of their men had been killed, they returned home empty handed. And a second time they fought against Cilgerran in vain, without getting the castle..."*

In 1169 Robert fitz Stephen was freed by Rhys ap Gruffydd and led a force to Ireland for the King. According to writer J. R. Phillips, King Henry II was entertained at Cilgerran Castle by Lord Rhys in 1172, whilst en route to Ireland. It is reputed that a bard related Arthurian legends to the King at this place. The visitation is highly unlikely to have taken place, though Rhys ap Gruffydd had found favour with King Henry at that time and became the Justiciar of South Wales the same year. From 1171 until 1189 there was a period of peace between the local Welsh and the English Crown, which rapidly deteriorated after Richard I succeeded to the throne. Rhys ap Gruffydd died in 1197, and in 1199 his son Gruffydd ap Rhys treacherously took the castle from his brother, Maelgwn. Upon Gruffydd's death in 1201 the castle passed to his brother, Maelgwn ap Rhys.

In 1204 William Marshal (1146-1219), the Earl of Pembroke captured Cilgerran Castle with astonishing speed. According to the '*Brut*':

*"...The same year, William Marshal came with a vast army to fight against Cilgerran, which he subdued..."*

According to one source he captured the castle even before the Welsh garrison had time to arm themselves. William Marshal is a major figure in British history. He was knighted in 1166 and was described by one commentator as "the greatest knight that ever there lived." He was a formidable jousting and warrior. In 1189 he became the First Earl of Pembroke through marriage. He is recognised as being one of the prime movers behind Magna Carta. From 1216 he became the regent of the boy King Henry III until Marshall's death in 1219.

In 1215 the followers of Llywelyn ap Iorwerth captured Cilgerran Castle. Llywelyn "Fawr" alias Llewellyn the Great, granted it the following year, to Maelgwn ap Rhys. William Marshal, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Earl of Pembroke, brought an army to Cilgerran and captured the castle in April 1223 and:

*"...began to build an ornate castle of mortar and stones..."*

This is believed to have been the building phase that included the East Tower, and was the first major construction built from stone at the site. William Marshal, who had been born in 1190 in Normandy, and who had opposed the King during the Baron's War in 1215, was called away to meet the King soon afterwards, leaving his garrison and workmen to continue their work. He became the Justiciar of Ireland in 1224. On 5<sup>th</sup> April 1231 William Marshal died suddenly. As he was childless, his estates passed to his younger brother, Richard Marshal, then aged about 40 years. On May 15<sup>th</sup> 1231 John de Cusington was the Constable of Cilgerran, but on June 10<sup>th</sup> 1231 he was ordered to deliver the castle to John Marshal and Aumeric de St. Amando:

*"...to whom the King has granted the said castle..."*

Richard Marshal finally succeeded to his inheritance in August 1231. In 1233 Richard Marshal co-ordinated a small-scale uprising against the King. After Richard Marshal was treacherously slain in Ireland in April 1234, the castle passed to his brother, Gilbert Marshal. In early 1241 Gilbert Marshal imprisoned

Maelgwn ap Maelgwn ap Rhys here, for failing to pay fealty to him. This landed him in trouble with the King, and the court found against Gilbert. Gilbert Marshal died after a riding accident at a tournament near Hereford on 27<sup>th</sup> June 1241. The castle then passed to Walter Marshal. On July 1<sup>st</sup> 1241 the constable was ordered to deliver the castle to Hubert Huse following Gilbert Marshal's death. Walter Marshal formerly came into possession of the castle on 28<sup>th</sup> October 1241. When Walter Marshal died on November 24<sup>th</sup> 1245, the castle passed to Anselm Marshal and then, upon Anselm's death on December 22<sup>nd</sup> 1245, to Eva Marshal, his sister. Eva Marshal married William de Cantilupe of Abergavenny. On December 3<sup>rd</sup> 1245 Cilgerran was placed in the custody of Nicholas de Meules. On January 16<sup>th</sup> 1246 Nicholas de Meules was ordered to hand Cilgerran into the custody of Robert Walerand – then the Bailiff of Pembroke and Haverford. That year the Lordship of Cilgerran was separated from Pembroke, and Cilgerran passed to Eva de Cantilupe. On July 21<sup>st</sup> 1246 Robert Walerand handed the castle directly to Eva Cantilupe.

Following the death of William Cantilupe in 1254, the castle passed to his two-year-old son, George Cantilupe. On August 2<sup>nd</sup> 1255 the Constable was ordered to hand the castle to Prince Edward. Prince Llywelyn ap Gruffydd ravaged the surrounding countryside in 1257, when he captured Cemais, and the Welsh successfully resisted a treacherous attack by Patrick of Chaworth in 1258. The castle was attacked and damaged, but was not taken. Patrick of Chaworth was amongst the slain and the Welsh were victorious. Nicholas Fitz Martin had custody of the castle until March 15<sup>th</sup> 1265 when he handed over Cilgerran to Guy de Brian. In 1273 George Cantilupe came of age and inherited the castle, but died later that year, after which the castle went to his sister's son, John de Hastings of Abergavenny – another minor. During his tenure it seems that Nicholas Fitz Martin had charge of the castle on his behalf. On October 28<sup>th</sup> 1273 Henry de Bray was appointed to the position of Constable. An inquisition stated that during Nicholas Fitz Martin's custody, damage caused to the castle buildings required repairs worth £66 (100 marks). The castle, was said to be:

*"...defective in towers and in all other buildings, as well as in walls and other things..."*

Cilgerran Castle was transferred from Henry de Bray to the French nobleman and knight William de Valence on May 13<sup>th</sup> 1275. William de Valence was confirmed as the Constable in 1282, paying £46 a year for the position. The castle had already been stripped of furnishings by that date.

In 1283 John de Hastings came of age. In 1287 John de Hastings was the Lord of Cilgerran and took part in the war against Rhys ap Maredudd that year and served in the Scottish wars of Edward I and Edward II. In 1302-04 he acted as Seneschal of Gascony. On March 15<sup>th</sup> 1308 John de Hastings granted Cilgerran to his son, another John de Hastings. From 1309-11 the elder John de Hastings was Seneschal of Gascony again. John Hastings the elder died in 1313. John Hastings the younger was still the Lord of Cilgerran in 1318-19. John de Hastings died early in 1325 and his property was escheated to King Edward II. John's heir by his wife, Juliana de Leybourne, was Laurence Hastings, who had been born on 20<sup>th</sup> March 1320 in Warwickshire. In January 1325 Roger de Arderne became the Constable. In April 1325 Hugh Despenser the younger became the Constable of Cilgerran as he had the wardship of the young Laurence Hastings. In September 1325 Juliana le Blount and Thomas le Blount were assigned Cilgerran as dower. The castle was said to be *"...worth nothing..."* in rent in 1326, because it lay *"...in ruins..."*

Juliana le Blount retained Cilgerran as the dower. After the fall of the Despensers, Prince Edward passed responsibility for the young Laurence to Roger Mortimer. In May 1328 Roger married his daughter, Agnes, to Laurence Hastings. In 1330 Roger Mortimer was executed and Edward III took personal control of Laurence's well-being. Laurence lived in the Royal household until April 1333, when his custody was handed to his mother, Juliana, by that time the wife of William de Clinton, and joined her at Coventry. In 1335 he became the temporary steward of Bury St Edmunds' Abbey, despite his tender years. By April 1338 he had entered the King's military service, and he took part in every major military campaign except for Crecy, between 1339 and 1347. He was at Antwerp in 1338-39, and then Brussels before seeing action in the vicinity of Cambrai. In October 1339 he was at Mont-Saint-Martin when the King authorised him to take control of his own estates in Pembrokeshire, although Juliana remained dower of Cilgerran. After seeing action at La Capelle, Laurence accompanied the King to Brussels, but by January 1340 he was briefly back in England. Later that year he was back with the King for the siege of Tournai, before returning to England again in November. In the Spring of 1341, while supporting the King's campaign in

Scotland, Lawrence Hastings came of age, paid homage, and received full control of his estates, though Juliana retained Cilgerran. In 1342-43 Lawrence served the King in France again, and after spending much of 1344-45 in England, returned to France in 1345. He died suddenly at Abergavenny on 30<sup>th</sup> August 1348, aged 28 years. He left a son, John de Hastings, aged just one year.

John de Hastings became the heir to Cilgerran Castle and his father's other estates in August 1348 upon the death of his father, Lawrence Hastings. He had been born on 29<sup>th</sup> August 1347 at the manor of Sutton Valence in Kent. In 1359 John de Hastings married Margaret, the youngest daughter of King Edward III. Sadly she died in 1361. On 20<sup>th</sup> December 1364 John was granted the wardship of all of his late father's lands. In 1367 Juliana le Blount, the grandmother of John De Hastings, died. In 1368 his mother, Agnes, died and Cilgerran and all of the other estates passed into the full possession of John de Hastings on 12<sup>th</sup> September. The same year he married Anne, the daughter and heiress of Sir Walter de Mauny. In the Spring of 1369 de Hastings, Earl of Pembroke, was sent to join the Black Prince in France, where they besieged Bourdeilles. As a result of his service here, De Hastings was knighted. Later that year, after besieging La Riche-sur-Yon, he was sent to hold Mortagne, and continued active service into 1372. In 1370 John Dantesswyllt was the Constable of Cilgerran. In 1372 John de Hastings was sent to Aquitaine with the English fleet which was defeated off the coast of La Rochelle. Imprisoned for more than two years in Spain. John de Hastings died on 16<sup>th</sup> April 1375, probably at Arras, on his way to be released for a ransom, leaving his estate to his three-year-old son, John de Hastings.

John de Hastings had been born on 11<sup>th</sup> November 1372, and was only two years old when his father died. On 22<sup>nd</sup> April 1375 the Hastings estates were taken into the King's hands, ostensibly until November 1393, when de Hastings was due to come of age. In November 1375 Edward III appointed Thomas More as his receiver for Cilgerran. In July 1377 Walter Mille became the steward and Constable of Cilgerran. In 1377, shortly before his death, King Edward III ordered that the castle should be surveyed, repaired and refortified by Sir Diggory Seys. In March 1378 the estate was placed in the custody of William Beauchamp, who held the lordship until John de Hastings came of age on February 22<sup>nd</sup> 1387. On March 3<sup>rd</sup> 1378 David Cradoc became Lord of Cilgerran. It may have been during this period that the NW tower was built. In 1380 John de Hastings was married to Elizabeth, the daughter of John of Gaunt. She quickly left, and they were divorced in 1383. In 1386 he married Philippa, the daughter of the earl of March. It was noted in 1387 that the castle had suffered damage whilst in the custody of William Beauchamp. Control of the castle and lordship passed to John de Hastings at that time. Minor repairs were conducted from 1388 until 1390. On December 30<sup>th</sup> 1389 John de Hastings died, after being wounded in a joust at Woodstock. After the Hastings family died out in this manner, Cilgerran Castle passed to the Crown.

Minor repairs in 1390 cost 6s. 6d. That year Richard Chelmeswyth became the Constable and forester of Cilgerran, with Roger Wigmore as receiver. In June 1393 Geoffrey Bluet was the receiver of the lordship. In 1397 Queen Isabel controlled Cilgerran, with Thomas Percy acting as her custodian. Before his death on November 26<sup>th</sup> 1399, Thomas Ponynge and his wife, Philipa, had petitioned the King for possession of the lands which had formerly been held by her first husband, John de Hastings, deceased. Thomas Ponynge was her third husband.

On March 31<sup>st</sup> 1402 Thomas Percy, who was the Lord of Cilgerran on July 5<sup>th</sup>, was licensed to buy military equipment to provision this and other castles against the Glyndwr rebels. On 30<sup>th</sup> October 1403 Sir Francis de Court, one of Henry IV's foreign companions and friends, acquired the constablership of Cilgerran Castle. Glyndwr supporters briefly held the castle in 1405 and some damage was inflicted upon it. Afterwards it returned to Sir Francis de Court. In 1407 Francis was with the King at the siege of Aberystwyth Castle. In 1408 he married Alice de Vere, the sister of the Earl of Oxford. He died on 11<sup>th</sup> September 1413. About two months before Francis died, Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester, the brother of the King, received the castle, and on 16<sup>th</sup> May 1414 he became the Earl of Pembroke. For 1434-35 William Burghill was his receiver for the lordship. Upon the Duke's death in 1443, the King decreed that Cilgerran would pass to William, Earl of Suffolk and his heirs. By Act of Parliament in 1450, for the purposes of maintaining the King's Household, an assignment of £100 was made out of the farm of the castle and lordship of Cilgerran to Sir John Beauchamp of Powick from 31<sup>st</sup> May. On December 16<sup>th</sup> 1450, Gruffydd

ap Dafydd and William John leased the lordships of Cilgerran, Dyffryn Broyan and Emlyn Is Cuch for 12 years. Gruffydd ap Nicholas entered the partnership the following year.

Jasper Tudor received custody of the castle of Cilgerran on 23<sup>rd</sup> November 1452 as Earl of Pembroke, although he was unable to get possession from Gruffydd ap Nicholas until the following March, and held it until 1461, together with the town and lordship. These were confirmed and granted by Act of Parliament in 1454, as was his annual rent. On 3<sup>rd</sup> February 1462 Sir William Herbert of Raglan was granted Cilgerran for his services against Jasper Tudor and the Lancastrians. Herbert was executed on 26<sup>th</sup> July 1469 following the Battle of Edgecote near Banbury. On 17<sup>th</sup> November 1469 Sir John Dwnn was appointed steward for the lordship of Cilgerran, and Herbert's young son, also William Herbert (b. 1455), inherited the position of lord of Cilgerran. In 1470 the Earldom of Pembroke was briefly seized by Jasper Tudor again, before returning to the control of the largely ineffectual William Herbert. In 1482 an agreement was made between William, Earl of Huntingdon, and Edward, Prince of Wales, that the heir to the throne, in return for diverse properties, would receive the castle, town and lordship of Cilgerran with appurtenances. Despite this, in May 1483 Henry Stafford, Duke of Buckingham, received the castle and lordship of Cilgerran. In October 1483 Buckingham rebelled against Richard III. As a result, King Richard III made Richard Williams, one of the ushers of the Royal chamber, the constable and steward of Cilgerran. When Henry Tudor succeeded to the throne in 1485, his uncle Jasper Tudor was given Cilgerran again as Earl of Pembroke on 12<sup>th</sup> December. He held it until 1495. In that year, it was confirmed his possession, King Henry VII nullified the decree of 1482, which had placed it in the hands of the King's heir.

In January 1496 William Vaughan became the Lord of Cilgerran, farming the lordship for an annual payment of £48. 13s. If he paid up each Michaelmas, his bond of 100 marks would be cancelled. On May 26<sup>th</sup> 1509 William Vaughan became the Constable of Cilgerran until 1526. In April 1534 the Act of Union abolished the Marcher lordships, and Cilgerran became part of the new County of Pembrokeshire. In 1548 Dr. Thomas Phaer of Forest was given the post of Constable of Cilgerran. He was a physician to the Royal household, a writer of medical books, a translator of Greek classical literature into English, and an overseer of maritime activities, during the course of his colourful career. He died at Fforest, Cilgerran, in 1560. In 1592 Thomas Revell of Forest farmed the Castle and demesnes of Cilgerran.

By 1685 the ruins had passed to the Pryse family of Gogerddan, and remained in their possession in 1866. The Buck brothers produced an engraving of the ruins in 1740 which, on comparison with the existing remains, appears fairly accurate. Richard Wilson made a painting of the ruins in 1773. The castle was mentioned in "*Wyndham's Tour*" of 1781. References in 1787 to "...*The Red Tower...*", "...*the White Tower...*" and "...*Outward Green...*" refer to portions of the site. The colours ascribed to the towers are probably due to the traces of lime-wash still visible on their walls. In 1791 the Outer Bailey was being used as a tennis court, maintained by Alban Thomas. In 1793 Sir Richard Colt Hoare wrote:

*"...The castle belongs to Mr. Lovedene and is a considerable building. Two large round towers remain with a staircase entire..."*

In 1798 Rev. Richard Warner and Henry Skrine mentioned the ivy-clad ruins. Richard Fenton visited and described the ruins in 1810.

*"...The castle...consists of several bastions of different forms, and different degrees of preservation, connected by curtains of various lengths and directions, accommodated to the shape of the foundation rock it rests upon, which is of the slaty kind, of very considerable height, and rising almost perpendicularly from the bed of the river.*

*Quitting the barge, we ascend by a winding path up the hill on the west side of the ruins, till we arrive at the entrance fronting the village of Cilgerran. It had once another ballium or ward flanked with bastions, whose foundation line may be now clearly traced, though the superstructure has been removed. The inner ward is of great extent, and involving the keep and all the state apartments, and is much more uniform and entire than from the dilapidated state of its external you have reason to expect..."*

Joseph Turner painted a view of the ruins in 1830. In 1833 Samuel Lewis commented:

*“...The ruins of the castle rank among the most striking, extensive, and picturesque remains of the ancient fortresses in South Wales...”*

Rev. Joseph Romilly visited Cilgerran Castle in 1837 and remarked that:

*“...the situation is a delightfull one, but the ruins have very little interest. George however and Edward and I clambered up the tower and every accessible part...”*

In 1850 it was estimated that £100-£200 would be sufficient to guarantee the survival of the ruins, if properly managed. The Cambrian Archaeological Association visited on August 18<sup>th</sup> 1859 and described the ruins thus in the 'Pembrokeshire Herald' on September 2<sup>nd</sup> 1859:

*“...From the churchyard the excursionists proceeded to the castle, respecting which, the notes read by Mr Moggridge went to show that it once had another vallum, flanked with bastions; that the inner ward was large, having the state apartments and keep; that there are five entrances (Pumporth), besides a sally port on each side...Cilgerran, in which we are now assembled, may be called, technically, an Edwardian Castle, though probably earlier than Edward I. It is a very interesting specimen, because it does not exhibit the usual symmetry of those buildings, but is adapted by the engineer to the character of the ground, which you will observe forms naturally a very strong position. The Church brook on the north east front, flowing down a very deep and steep ravine here joins the Teifi, which, occupying a similar but larger ravine, forms the north-west front. Two sides of the castle are thus well protected by nature, and it was therefore to the defence of the other two that the engineer turned his chief attention.*

*Commencing with the Inner bailey, or court, in which we now stand, and which is of an irregularly square plan, we have, on the northern, side, abutting upon the cliff, the Gate-house, a rectangular building, of which the northern half, including half the archway, has been removed. A rude groove may be seen, and part of a Portcullis chamber above. The Gate-house is connected by a short curtain wall with the south-west tower; a very fine cylindrical shell, containing four floors not vaulted, and a battlement platform. It is entered from the court by a plain door way, on the right of which is a well stair leading to each floor, to the Gate-house curtain, and to the battlement of the tower itself. The ground and first floor contain fire places, and the exterior loops are replaced towards the court by window openings. One of these is divided two lights by a rude pier, either an after-thought by the builder, or of later date. From this tower the curtain still of great height and thickness, passes on to the second similar tower. At its junction with this, the south-east tower, is a postern in the wall, and near the summit a relieving arch—an indication that this part of the curtain belongs rather to the south-east than to the south-west tower. The south-east tower resembles generally that already described. It has also a door to the court well stair, though on the left hand, ascending to all floors and to the curtain. There are no fire-places here, and the internal windows are in pairs, so it would appear that this tower, though evidently part of the general plan, may possibly be a few years older than the other.*

*From this tower the curtain extends north-eastwards, until it terminates in a sort of polygonal head upon the river cliff, where the breast wall commences. This breast wall, now much ruined, extends, along the river, or north-east front, as far as the angle which was occupied by a rectangular building, the ruins of which shew better masonry than the rest, and may have been the hall. It commanded a view of the two ravines, and over the adjacent country beyond. After this building the breast wall is continued along the north west face, capping the cliff, until it joins the Gate-house and thus completes the circuit of the river defences. In it is what may have been a sally port, and, nearer to the Gate-house, a considerable sewer. The outer bailey covers out the two landward faces, extending from cliff to cliff. It is traversed by a causeway, leading from the Gate house towards the village, and which runs along the edge of the north-west cliff, from which it was protected by a slight parapet. This bailey includes a dry moat from which the two drum towers rise, and a sort of platform sward, outside of which was probably an outer line of wall. South-eastward, this bailey is terminated by a curtain wall, which extends from the south-east drum tower close to the postern, traverses the moat and bailey and seems to have been returned southwards, to unite with the outer wall. It also contains a postern, by which, in connexion with the other door, a communication was secured with a road which led from the main entrance, sweeping under the outer walls down to the*

*Teify. On part of which this curtain was intended to command. On this side a formidable slate quarry has been opened which threatens to undermine the castle, and which should be stopped in this direction.*

*The masonry of Cilgerran is not unlike that of the coarser part of Caerphilly, being of a rude character, with very little ashlar even about the loops and windows, and in which the quality is replaced by quantity, the walls being of unusual thickness- The drum towers do not, as usual in Wales, have square bases, but, as at Caerphilly, are wholly cylindrical. The battlements have very slight projection, resting upon plain corbels. No chapel, or very distinct state apartments, have been traced, nor is there any well. This castle seems to have been constructed rather for defence than for the residence of a great baron, but it is of considerable interest, both from the important part it played in local history, and from its general plan, containing only two principal towers, and those placed very near together. Perhaps it may be attributed, in its present form, to the middle of the 13th century; but as this opinion, and indeed the whole description of the building were formed and acquired during a quarter of an hour's inspection of the castle, the lecturer stated it with some diffidence. At the conclusion of the lecture, which occupied about fifteen minutes, and delivered partly in the inner court and partly outside the castle, and in a style as fluent as it was captivating, the Bishop, as president of the Association, thanked the speaker for his exertions..."*

On July 29<sup>th</sup> 1863 a section of the bailey curtain wall, 56 feet long by 20 feet high, abutting the South West Tower, collapsed due to undermining caused by slate quarrying. The collapsed section was "made good" the following year at the expense of Col. Lewes, largely due to the efforts of Rev. Henry James Vincent, the Vicar of St. Dogmaels.

In 1866 John Roland Phillips described the ruins, including 'Capel Bach'. He refers to a portion of the ditch having been formerly used as a cattle pound. Writing of the South-West Tower, he states:

*"...An excellent spiral stone staircase, in almost a perfect state, leads to the battlements on the top, and has communication with each floor, the curtain wall and the gatehouse. The curious tourist is still enabled to ascend to its very top, and through an outlet can have egress to the outward battlement of the tower. To do this, however, requires a little courage, and is not entirely free from danger..."*

On August 24<sup>th</sup> 1888 an Eisteddfod was held in the grounds. A description and photograph of the ruins appeared in the 1899 *Cardigan Guide*. In 1904 the following comment was made in '*Archaeologia Cambrensis*:

*"...Cilgerran Castle, — This ancient building, visited in August by the Cambrian Archaeological Association, is in a most dilapidated and degraded condition, the staircases and chambers being in a most filthy condition: the attention of the owner should be called to it as soon as possible..."*

On August 15<sup>th</sup> 1900 an Eisteddfod was held here. In November 1904 a meeting was held at Cilgerran to discuss the preservation of the castle. In 1909 the castle was being used as a public convenience and a hen-roost. On June 14<sup>th</sup> 1916 a sale was held at the castle in aid of 'Our Boys'. On August 7<sup>th</sup> 1916 the National Masque entertainment was held here. On August 5<sup>th</sup> 1918 the first Cilgerran Annual Horticultural Show was held here. On August 3<sup>rd</sup> 1920 a competitive concert was held here.

On February 12<sup>th</sup> 1925 the Cilgerran Council elected to clean up the castle. On May 1<sup>st</sup> 1925 the Cilgerran Castle Committee intended removing soil from inside the towers and making a new entrance gate. A pillar and wall were discovered in one tower. By May 18<sup>th</sup> 1928 entrance gates had been erected at the two towers, and the grounds cleared. On May 9<sup>th</sup> 1930 it was decided to purchase a War Memorial plaque for the castle. On May 27<sup>th</sup> 1931 the castle was re-opened to the public by Sir Lewis Loveden Pryse, following renovations, which included a new entrance arch to the inner bailey.

On March 23<sup>rd</sup> 1934 the ruins were registered as a Scheduled Ancient Monument. In June 1934 reference was made to a fallen wall on the Pumporth side. On April 10<sup>th</sup> 1936 the Cilgerran Castle Committee was in negotiations with the Office of Works, who requested that £2,000 worth of repairs be conducted before they would take on the site. On August 26<sup>th</sup> 1936 a fete was held at Rhosygilwen to raise funds for the castle. On February 25<sup>th</sup> 1938 it was confirmed that the castle was to be offered to the

National Trust. On March 18<sup>th</sup> 1938, H. M. Office of Works announced their intention to restore the ruins. The site was donated to the state by Mrs. Colby, who had purchased it from Sir Lewes Pryse for that purpose. She insisted on the provision of a memorial plaque to John Vaughan Colby – her late husband. In April 1938 it was claimed that the castle would always be accessible free of charge. On May 24<sup>th</sup> 1944 and again on August 1<sup>st</sup> 1945, a day of boxing matches was held in the castle grounds to raise money for ‘Our Boys’ fund.

By July 18<sup>th</sup> 1947, restoration work had commenced with the removal of the ivy. In September 1947 local residents complained that the money spent on the three workmen employed at Cilgerran Castle would be better spent on local housing. From 1947 until 1958 Mrs. M. A. Morgan was the deputy-custodian. By February 25<sup>th</sup> 1949, numerous coins and foundations of walls, demolished by the gentry, years earlier, to create a tennis court here, were amongst the discoveries during the excavations. The castle is marked on the 1951 O. S. map and others. On January 23<sup>rd</sup> 1953 restoration work was still in progress. A booklet was written in 1953 by Oscar Lloyd-Jones, giving a history and description of the castle. In December 1955 four arrow-heads and two spear-heads were discovered during excavations here. In January 1956 a 700-year-old coin and a 500-year-old coin were found during excavations. In July 1956 there were 993 visitors to the site and 1, 900 in August – a record month for the monument. A guidebook was written in 1957 by O. E. Craster. In April 1957 a War Memorial Plaque was dedicated at the entrance. From 1958 until 1971 Mrs. M. A. Morgan acted as the custodian. In September 1961 it was proposed to build a wooden structure to give access to the wall-walk between the two towers.

On June 13<sup>th</sup> 1969 the castle was to be floodlit as part of the celebrations to mark the Investiture of the Prince of Wales. From 1990 until 2005 Joan Munro and Ian Munro were the key-holders. On September 4<sup>th</sup> 1994 Andrew Munro of Castle House and Estelle Bowles were married at the castle by Estelle's father, Jonathan Bowles. On 7<sup>th</sup> August 2002 Yllyria performed 'As You Like It' at the castle. On 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2004 the same company performed Jane Austin's 'Pride & Prejudice' at the castle. From 2009 until 2015 Catherine Collins was the caretaker. In late 2010 a geophysical survey located a ditch beneath the inner ward and a well beneath one of the towers. From 2013 until 2019 Glen Johnson gave monthly tours of the castle during the tourist season. In 2014 there were plans to replace the shop and to conduct a geophysical survey of the outer ward, although neither took place. From 2016 until 2017 Adam Dawson was the caretaker. In 2018 Alison Wootten became the new custodian and was in charge of the site in 2018-20. In March 2020 the castle was closed owing to the COVID-19 virus and Alison Wootten resigned.

### **Description:**

In 1994 the ruins were described by CADW:

*“...The ruins chiefly surround the inner ward, with two massive early C13 circular towers on the S side joined by curtain wall. To the W was the early C13 gatehouse of which the outer part has gone. The chapel may have been on the first floor. The W curtain wall over the steep drop to the Afon Plysgog is said to date to the later C13, and the partial remains of a NW tower possibly to the later C14. Insubstantial remains close the N side above the Teifi...”*

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