

# Nostalgia

Looking back at Pembrokeshire of yesteryear

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STANDING TALL: The house, rebuilt to match its former glory. (5935429)

## History is preserved brick by Tudor brick

MANY of you will have been to St Fagans and seen the medieval beauty that is the Tudor's Merchant's House, but do you know the history of how it got there? Historian Mark Muller tells all...

It makes an enormous difference to see a place complete and as it would have been. When I was there not only was the fireplace lit but the building was furnished beautifully and a "Tudor" resident was sat gazing into the flames.

Almost as soon as they took over the restaurant business in Quay Street in 1979, Carole Norgrove and her late husband, Peter, initiated the process to save this building. It became evident it was an invaluable gem that sparked interest from all over the country.

The Haverfordwest photo, taken in 1983, hasn't been published before. It was taken by the late Joe Masters and shows the initial dismantling of the house. After this, there followed a 30-year gap until the same

group of four men were asked to rebuild it at St Fagans.

This property, like no other (the Castle and Priory are not in the same category), could relate much of the history of the town and would have seen a good deal of it too.

It was built at about the same time as Henry Tudor, later Henry VII, was marching through Haverfordwest, recruiting as he made his way to Bosworth in 1485.

When the plague arrived in late 1651 it came by ship and would have seeped invisibly past this property to achieve the devastation that was to come.

The wealth and importance that Haverfordwest became famous for came largely through trade.

Goods from much of Western Europe that came in ships of up to 250 tons were either off-loaded at the quay and then carted past this property, or even stored in it.

Coinciding with the period when it was built was

the award to Haverfordwest in 1479 of its Charter that ended feudal over lordship and allowed it to function as an independent, self governing town.

An extremely informative programme televised in April 2012, called Brick by Brick, revealed that one hundred years after it was built, the Voyle family who were living in the socially more desirable portion of the town at the top of High Street, appear to have been the owners.

In 1584 Morgan Voyle rented the property to John Martin for ten shillings per year. The ground floor was an extremely strong storehouse, with the first floor consisting of a residence for either a caretaker or watchman, who was, at this point, probably John Martin.

At the time that this was happening it is evident that extremely valuable cargoes of wines and spices were appearing and coming to the town and the particularly strong structure of the

building and the nature of its layout suggest that they may well have been stored here.

Alteration in terms of usage of the property has never ceased - it has had to evolve and with the arrival of the railway to Haverfordwest in 1853, much of the river trade disappeared. It has to have been at that point that a fireplace was inserted into the ground floor, suggesting that its days as a port storehouse were over and its new function as a residence (both floors) had begun.

When it was dismantled it was found too difficult to label all of the individual stones and instead, the corner stones were marked and hundreds of photographs taken to suggest the position of others.

In 2012 Carole Norgrove was invited to St Fagans to unveil the completed rebuilding. It is to be celebrated that one property of this town has been valued and saved and is well worth a visit to St Fagans.



WRECK: The Tudor house before it was demolished. PICTURE: The late Joe Masters, courtesy of Frances Masters. (5935424)