

## Local Interest Group Visit to the Castle in Painscastle 30<sup>th</sup> August 2018

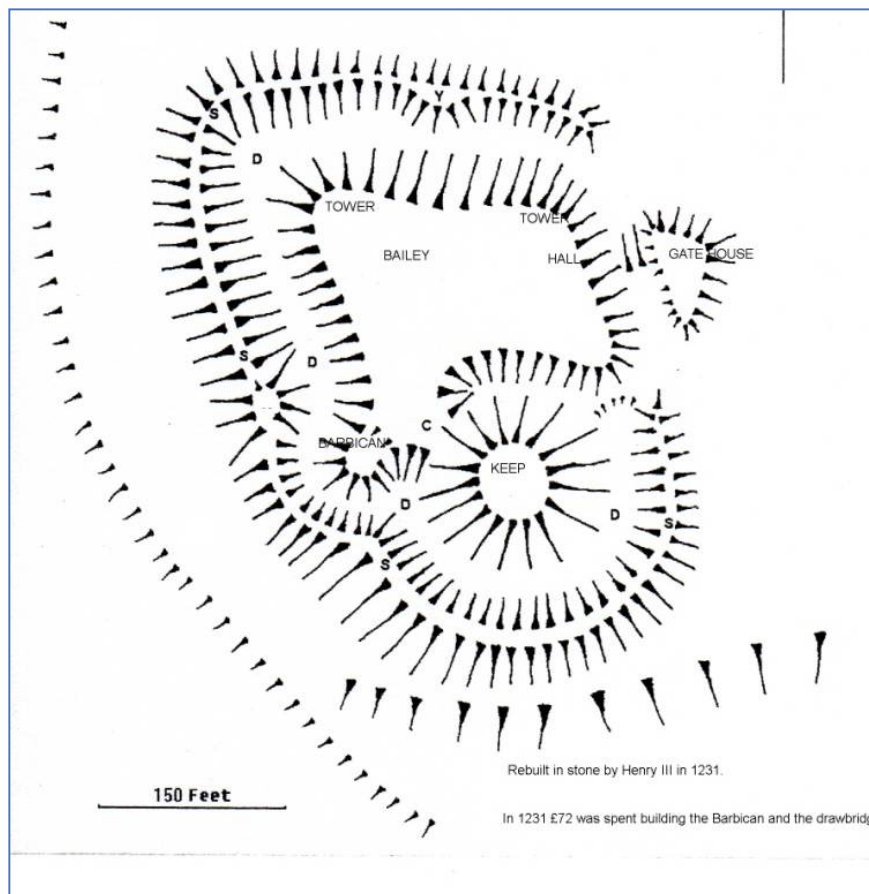
**Present:** Maureen Lloyd (ML), Wendy and Dainis Ozols, Roy and Avryl Lloyd, Iris Lloyd, Shirley Meredith, Jacqui Mills, Celia Price, Cheryl Williams, Evelyn Bally, Tim Francis, Neville Harley, Jenny Francis, Ann and Howard Dean, Vicky Gore, Helen Barnett, Stephen and Judy Mullard, Carole Gibbs, Sue and John Ievers, Bernie Brown, Michelle and Phil Pratten, Sue and Phil Griffiths, Catherine Hughes, Johnnie Kramer, Margaret Warne, Alan Thomas, Mike and Val Head, Deri Jones, Richard Thomas, Margaret and John Price (JP), Dennis Boon, Anne Hitchcox, Grace Davies, Juliet and Oliver Lewis, Richard Harris, Gareth Jenkins, Rob Sutherland, Bethan Davies, Wayne and Thomas Maddy.

**Apologies:** Joan Lloyd

### Visit to Castle Twmp

ML welcomed everyone and said a special thank you to Owain and Iris Lloyd, who had most generously given their permission for us to have access to the castle, which is on their land.

ML explained that the castle in Painscastle had been a very important one, and that it had had "an extremely chequered career". It was built circa 1130 by Pain Fitz John, a Norman, who was advisor to Henry I. ML circulated photocopies of the plan of the castle so that we could see the layout.



It is a typical motte and bailey castle. The motte is a high mound, about 30ft high and with a basal diameter of around 120ft, on top of which there would have been a tower or keep (probably built of

wood at this date). The motte is surrounded by a ditch. The bailey is a rectangular shaped area on the north side of the motte; this is approximately 200ft by 150ft. There is a surrounding moat which was probably always dry. The diagram above (from 'The Castles and History of Radnorshire' by Paul Martin Remfry) shows the location of the keep on the motte, the barbican to the west and two towers on the northern side of the bailey. There was probably a gatehouse on the eastern side. These features were all built at different times. The barbican and drawbridge are said to have cost Henry III £72 to build, a considerable amount in the 13<sup>th</sup> century.

There is some speculation that the castle may have been built on the site of a Roman fort and the rectangular shape of the bailey lends this theory some support. However, there is no evidence of there being such a pre-existing structure. JP told us that a 1923 work by a Mrs Dawson makes mention of the fact that the "commanding site seems to have been known to Romans and Britons as the Caer yn Elfael." She went on to say that the evidence to support the theory that the Romans had been here was as follows: "the castle precincts are intersected by four roads at right angles in approved Roman fashion; the place was known as Caer; and, in the last century (19<sup>th</sup>) workmen digging on the site uncovered a beautiful tessellated pavement. Unfortunately, local superstition pronounced it to be a fairies' pavement and consequently it was quickly covered up again lest the fairy folk should be offended..." It is true that castle builders in the past often chose sites which were half prepared, and so there may be some truth in this supposition. There is certainly a commanding view of the Bachawy valley, both upstream and downstream, from the twmp today.



Between 1184 and 1189, there was a period of relative peace in this area and the castle was probably refortified during this time by Einon o'r Porth, a Welsh prince into whose hands the castle had come after Pain's death. This had brought the castle into the hands of the Welsh. He died in 1191 and William de Braose (another Norman) took over Elfael and rebuilt the castle, possibly in stone. He named it Castrum Matildis after his wife, Maud de Braose. In 1231, Henry III conquered Elfael and spent three months in Painscastle. At this time there were certainly stone-masons working on the castle and the barbican was built.

The castle was granted to Ralph de Tosny in 1233 and he died in 1239 and was succeeded by his son, Roger de Tosny, who came of age in 1256. The castle stayed in de Tosny hands until 1265. As part of the Pipton Agreement (1265) between Llewelyn ap Gruffudd and the government of Simon de Montfort, Llewelyn took over Elfael. (This Treaty was agreed after Simon de Montfort had defeated Henry III at the Battle of Lewes in 1264. As part of the treaty agreement, Llewelyn was acknowledged as Prince of Wales.) The Chronicle of Battle Abbey records that Llewelyn destroyed Painscastle, "levelling it to the ground"; whether it was completely levelled is not certain. It is recorded that, in 1265, Painscastle had 100 burgesses (a burgess was an inhabitant of a town who had full rights of citizenship) and a probable population of around 500. In 1276, Ralph de Tosny took over Elfael and, in 1309, when the male line died out, Elfael passed to the Earls of Warwick through marriage. In 1401, the castle was refortified and "garrisoned with twelve men at arms and 24 archers" in response to the ongoing threat from Owain Glyndwr.

1401 is the last recorded mention of the castle and it gradually became obsolete. No stones remain and it is probable that many of the older buildings in the village are constructed from stone "salvaged" from the castle ruins.

In response to a question about whether the castle saw action, ML said that it was besieged in 1196 and then again in the Battle of Painscastle, which took place in 1198.



For those who are interested in learning more about the castle, its history and the Battle of Painscastle, there is more information on the local website in the history section.

<https://www.painscastle-rhosgoch.co.uk/history-timeline.html>

While we investigated the motte, John Price (Hay) read a few extracts from his collection of historical books and the more recent 'Radnorshire From Above' by Chis Musson, which includes an excellent aerial view of the castle. One of the extracts was from a site visit by the Woolhope Club, who came up to Painscastle on May 30th 1911:

"The group was led amongst others by the Rev W.E.T. Morgan BA, Vicar of Llanigon. The party was met by Mr Tuck, the tenant of Castle Farm, who conducted them to the top of the mound where the keep stood. From this point a fine view of the surrounding country was obtained, including the Brecon Beacons, the Radnorshire Hills, the Black Mountains, and the higher Herefordshire hills. An interesting diversion in the day's proceedings was the fact that some field operations by yeomanry in the camp at Brecon were being engaged in, and the party had an opportunity of seeing modern tactics of war. Here and there on the road to Painscastle the party had passed by a soldier alone but for his horse watching a bridge, a lane, a gate or otherwise as the case might be. At the Maesllwch Arms at Painscastle they saw a small party mounted, washing down the dust collected during the operations, and above on the site of the old castle, a machine gun was in position ready for the fray."

ML reiterated her thanks to the Lloyd family for allowing us access to the castle. We all took plenty of time to investigate the quite extensive and impressive mounds and ditches which remain, using the plan that ML had provided to guide us around the site. We certainly enjoyed the commanding views of the valley on a lovely still and clear evening.

### **The Gossip AGM**

After the visit to the castle, the group retired to the Roast Ox in order to enjoy some refreshment and also to review the progress of the local newspaper, The Gossip, edited by ML.

ML started by asking whether everyone was happy with the current format and content of the Gossip. All agreed that it is an excellent, most informative and, above all, enjoyable publication, with something for everyone. It was agreed that Mikey's Column was probably the highlight of most editions, and everyone also enjoys the Farm Focus. The Culinary Column is also widely read. ML asked that if anyone has suggestions for other "regular" features, please could they let her know. She welcomes all input, long and short, and would especially like to know of events that are planned in the local or surrounding area so that she can include them in the Diary section. She is also keen for people to advertise things for sale in the Gossip and there is no charge for this.

Deri Jones, the Treasurer, then took us through the accounts for the year 2017-18. The rise in printing costs is due to there being more copies required. There has been some "casual help" employed by the Editor this year and so the net profit is down a little on the previous year's. However, this is not a problem as making a profit is not the aim, rather it is to provide a publication enjoyed by all. Any profit that is made can be used for local projects, as it was in 2016-17 when a grant was given to help with the refurbishment of the bus shelter.

ML thanked Deri for his input and for acting as Treasurer. All agreed that ML should stay on as Editor. She does a really excellent job and she should be justly proud of the exceptional publication that is The Gossip. Grateful thanks were proposed to ML for all of her hard work and perseverance.