

By late 1326 the King's position had weakened again leading him to seek support in Wales against the English aristocracy. The King and Despenser may have been imprisoned at Llantrisant Castle after being caught by Henry of Lancaster and others at Pant-y-Brad (the Hollow of Treason) on their return journey from Neath on November 16th. Hugh de Despenser was executed at Hereford four days later. The King abdicated in January 1327 and was murdered at Berkeley castle.



Despenser Family Arms

From about 1404 Llantrisant Castle fell into decay, a visit by Leland in the late 1530s found it to be in ruin but he reported it had 'beene a fair castella and had two wardes, the inner diked having among other toures one great and high caullid Giruran' (the Raven which is the part still standing).

The castle and other lands of Llantrisant were acquired in time by the Marquis of Bute, but he obviously made no real attempt to restore it as he did with Cardiff, Castell Coch and Caerphilly.

The Borough Council of Taff Ely purchased the site on 22nd December 1993 from Mr Tudor John, David Nathaniel John and Trevor Thomas John, and are working to preserve the remains of Llantrisant Castle and to improve the surrounding area for posterity.

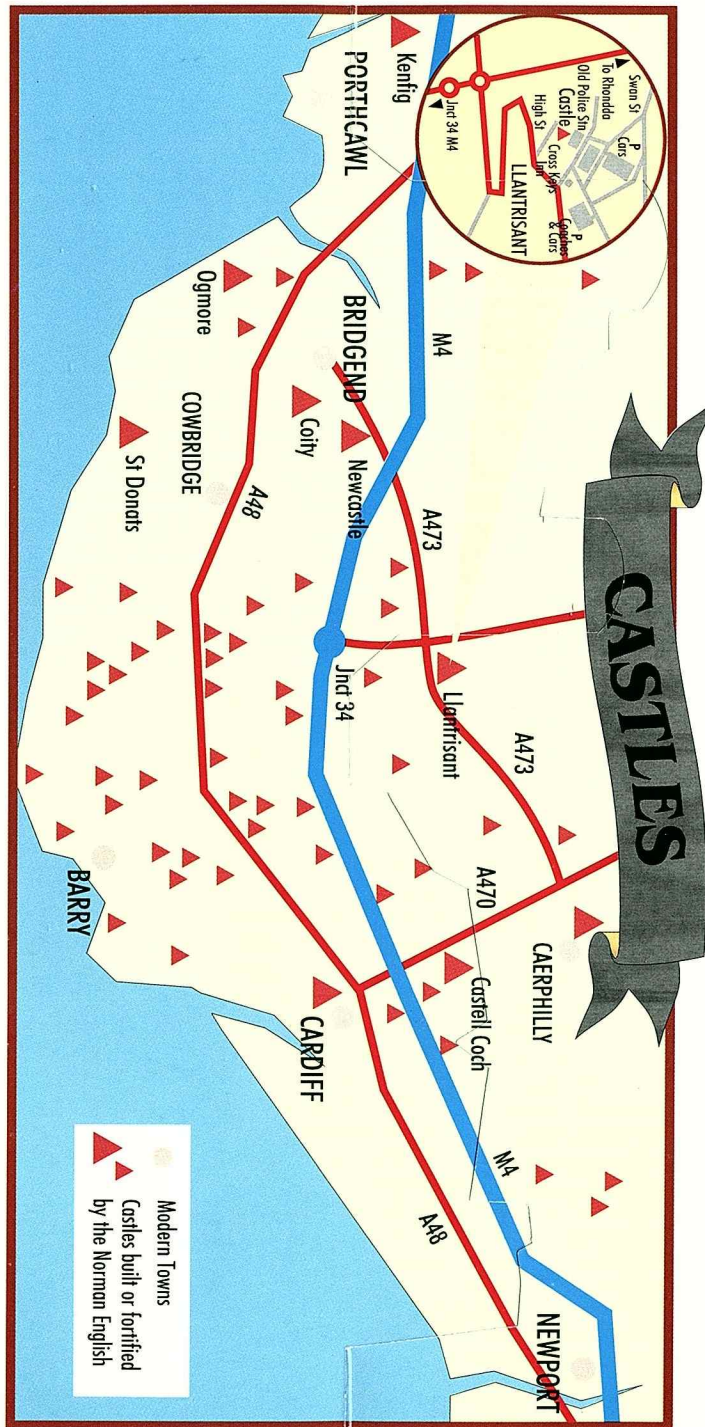
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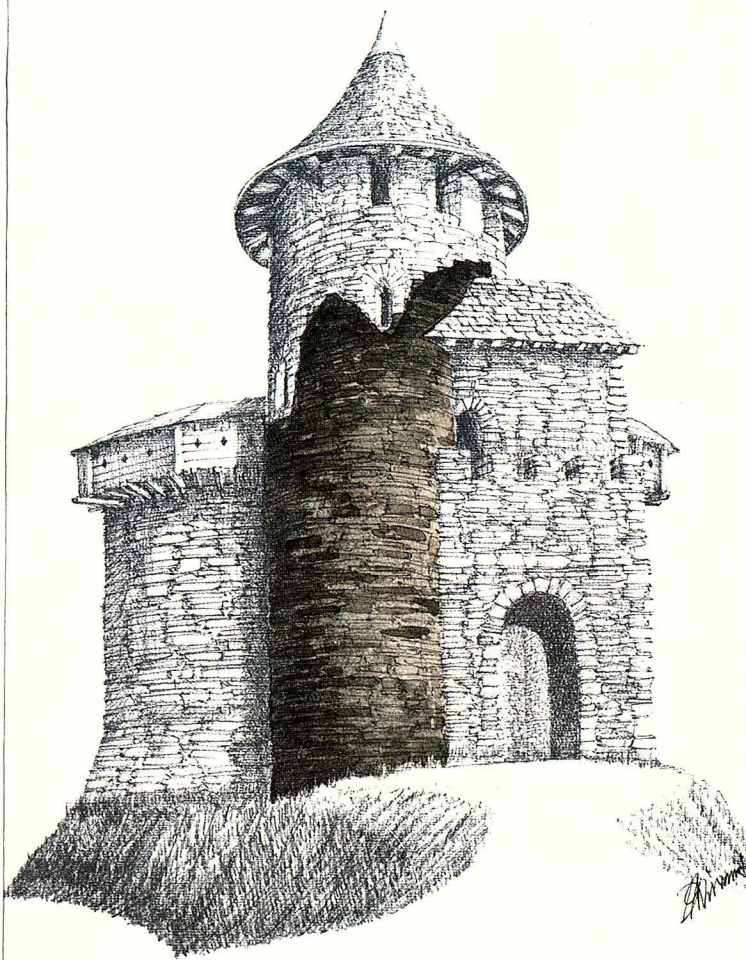
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# LLANTRISANT CASTLE

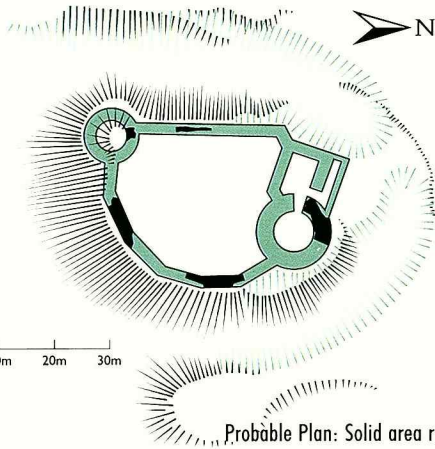


Artist's impression by David Williams showing the Castle as it may have appeared during the Middle Ages.

Coloured area represents remaining upstanding monument.



# LLANTRISANT CASTLE



Probable Plan: Solid area remains

**L**lantrisant Castle probably dates back to the 13th century, but as seen today is a ruin. The castle however may have been preceded by a stone and / or timber defence with ditches which in turn was developed on a much earlier stronghold.

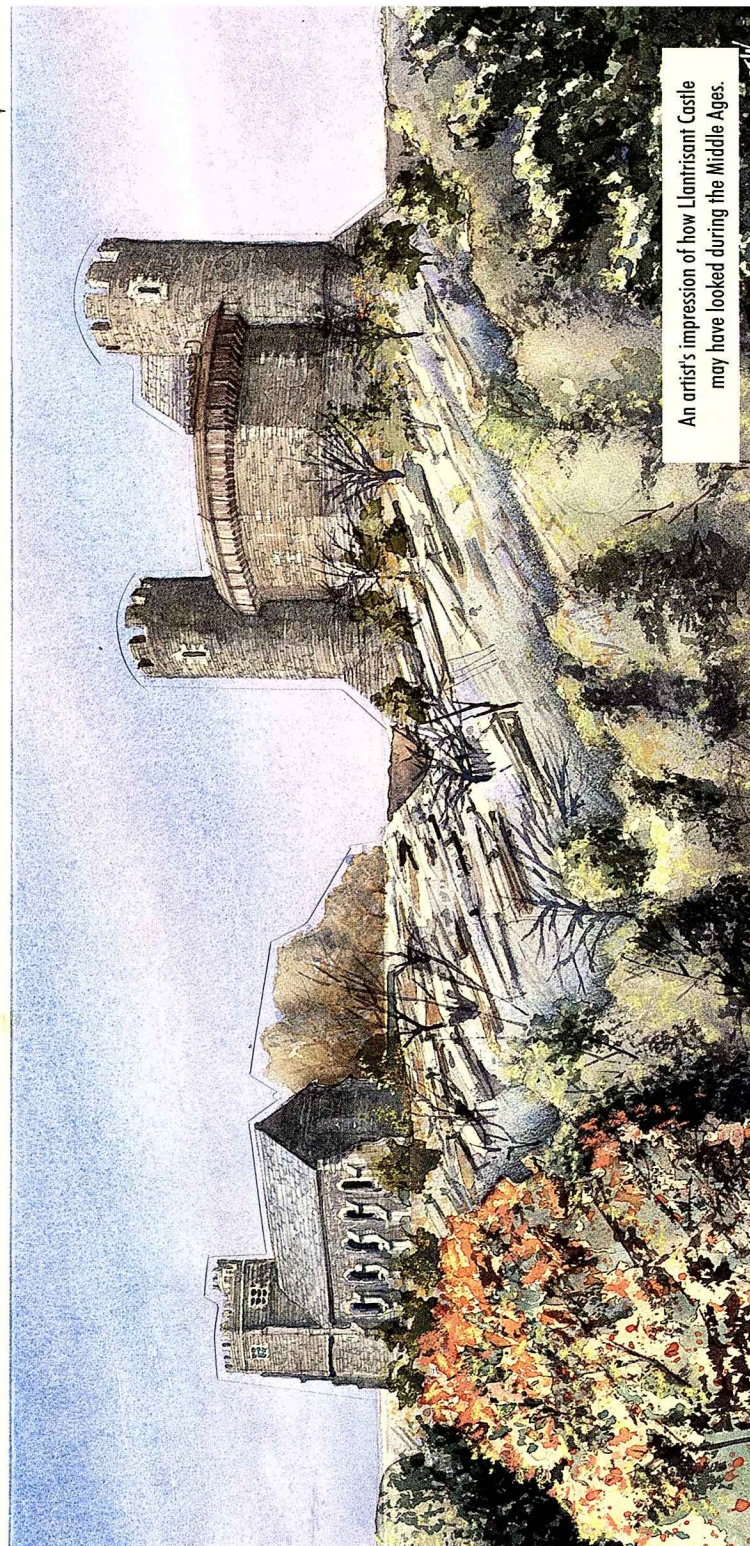
Fortified by Earl Richard de Clare (c.1246) after driving out Hywel ap Maredudd (the local Welsh Lord) the castle of Llantrisant is situated on a ridge overlooking the Vale and defended a route which led to ancient tracks into the Uplands of Glamorgan.



De Clare Family Arms

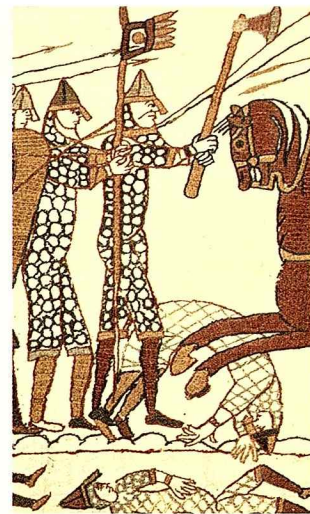
Having acquired the Earldom of Gloucester through marriage, the de Clares, who took their name from the fief of Clare in Suffolk, sought to further their hold on the lordship of Glamorgan.

The castles of Cardiff, Coity, Ogmere, Newcastle, Neath, Kenfig and many other strategic defences stand as a testimony to the remarkable building activities carried out by the early Norman English in Wales following the death of King Caradog (d.1081).



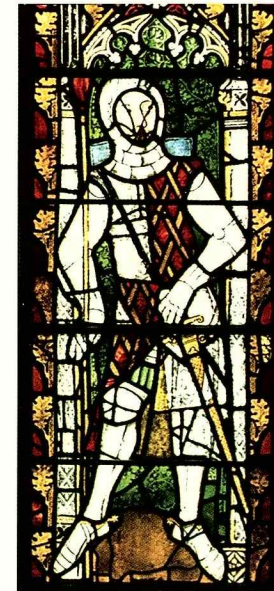
An artist's impression of how Llantrisant Castle may have looked during the Middle Ages.

Tradition that Robert Fitzroy, first Earl of Gloucester and Lord of Glamorgan (d.1147) built the castle of Llantrisant in Meisgyn is unproven, however the Norman church built from 1096 onwards supports claims for early 'foundation'. By 1252 Margaret, Richard de Clare's fifth child, was born in the castle and his eldest son Gilbert the Red (d.1295) went on to build Caerphilly Castle in 1268.



Extract from the Bayeux Tapestry

During its short history as a fighting castle Llantrisant was severely damaged by Welsh attacks on four occasions between 1259 and 1316. The Public Record Office in London holds a fascinating series of records of the re-building and repairs to both the castle and burgages which were devastated on each occasion.



above: Stained Glass window at Tewkesbury Abbey showing Hugh de Despenser in heraldic surcoat.  
below: Tomb effigy of Edward II at Gloucester Cathedral.

In 1321 the castle was wrecked along with Cardiff, Caerphilly and others by English Barons in pursuit of Hugh de Despenser the Younger a favourite of Edward II. Despenser had succeeded the de Clares as Lord of Glamorgan on his marriage to Eleanor, the eldest de Clare heiress in 1317. This led to Despenser's exile until 1322 when he re-established his authority after the King's defeat of the Barons at Boroughbridge.

