

An aerial photograph of an archaeological excavation site, showing a large, roughly rectangular area of earth that has been dug up. The ground is uneven and shows signs of recent work, with some areas appearing darker and more textured than others. In the background, there are some buildings and a road, suggesting a rural or semi-rural setting. The overall tone is black and white, emphasizing the textures and shapes of the excavation.

EXCAVATIONS AT  
DRYSLWYN CASTLE  
1980–95

CHRIS CAPLE

# Excavations at Dryslwyn Castle 1980–95

by  
**Chris Caple**

with contributions by

Edward Besley, Ian Betts, Ray Caple, Mark Copley, John Daniell, Stephanie Dudd, David  
Dungworth, Richard Evershed, Louisa Gidney, Alison Goodall, Ian Goodall†, Jacqui  
Huntley, Oliver Jessop, Alison Locker, Jennifer Miller, Sonia O'Connor,  
Chris Phillpotts, Clare Pickin, Susan Ramsay, Jeremy Reid, Carol Spence, Alice Thompson,  
Rachel Tyson, Catherine Vinson, Peter Webster and Hugh Willmott

Illustrations by  
Oliver Jessop



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru  
Welsh Assembly Government



 **Routledge**  
Taylor & Francis Group  
LONDON AND NEW YORK

THE SOCIETY FOR MEDIEVAL ARCHAEOLOGY  
MONOGRAPH 26

© 2007 The Society for Medieval Archaeology and authors

ISBN 13: 978-1-905981-88-5 (pbk)

Edited by Christopher Gerrard

Published 2017 by Routledge  
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN  
711 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017, USA

*Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business*

This publication has been made possible by a grant from Cadw

**The Society for Medieval Archaeology**  
**[www.socmedarch.org](http://www.socmedarch.org) / publications**

Cover: Dryslwyn Castle from the air, Terry James of Cambria Archaeology

## CONTENTS

List of Figures	v
Glossary	ix
Summary	x
Acknowledgements	xiii
<b>1 Excavation history and processes</b>	
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 The excavation	3
1.3 Phasing	7
1.4 Castle studies in Wales	8
1.5 Development of Welsh castles	11
<b>2 Welsh lordship period (1197–1287): historical and archaeological summary</b>	
2.1 History of the lordship and castle of Dryslwyn 1197–1287 (by C Caple and C Phillpotts)	17
2.2 Archaeological outline, Phases 1a–4b: the Welsh lord’s castle	32
<b>3 English garrison period (1287–1455): historical and archaeological summary</b>	
3.1 History of the English garrison period (1287–1455) (by C Caple and C Phillpotts)	41
3.2 Archaeological outline, Phases 4c–7d: the English garrison castle	48
<b>4 Inner Ward: excavation evidence</b>	
4.1 Areas D, E and P: Round Tower	57
4.2 Areas B, C and A: Gateway	71
4.3 Areas I, J, K and L: Great Hall, Kitchen and Apartments	87
4.4 Areas G, H and F: Great Chamber and Chapel	107
4.5 Areas O and M: Courtyard, Prison and latrines/garderobes	126
<b>5 Middle and Outer Wards: excavation evidence</b>	
5.1 Areas A, X, Y and XR: Middle Ward	137
5.2 Areas R, W, WA and WB: Outer Ward and Castle Gateway	142
<b>6 Castle construction</b>	
6.1 Building methods and materials (by C Caple, R F Caple and I Betts)	149
6.2 Architectural stonework (by R F Caple)	156
6.3 Mortar (by C Caple)	164
6.4 Painted wall-plaster (by C Caple and P Clogg)	165
6.5 Structural ironwork (by I H Goodall)	170
6.6 Nails (by A Thompson)	175
6.7 Window glass (by R Tyson)	183
<b>7 Siege and warfare</b>	
7.1 History of the revolt and siege (1287–97) (by C Phillpotts and C Caple)	185
7.2 Archaeological evidence of siege and warfare (by C Caple, R F Caple, O Jessop and C Phillpotts)	191
7.3 Weapons (by O Jessop)	197
7.4 Lithic projectiles (by R F Caple)	208

<b>8</b>	<b>Dryslwyn township</b>	
8.1	History of Dryslwyn township (by C Phillpotts and C Caple)	215
8.2	Areas T and S: town house and town wall	219
8.3	Area Z: town wall and ditch	221
8.4	Areas U and V: town gatehouse, town defences, roadway	223
8.5	Archaeological evidence of Dryslwyn township	225
<b>9</b>	<b>Artefactual evidence</b>	
9.1	Artefacts and activities	233
9.2	Pottery (by P Webster)	236
9.3	Coins (by E Besly)	245
9.4	Iron artefacts (by I H Goodall)	247
9.5	Copper-alloy and lead artefacts (by A Goodall)	257
9.6	Vessel glass (by R Tyson)	263
9.7	Bone, antler and ivory artefacts (by S O'Connor, C Spence and C Caple)	264
9.8	Stone artefacts (by H Willmott)	272
9.9	Miscellaneous artefacts (by C Caple, C Vinson and H Willmott)	277
9.10	Industrial residues (by D Dungworth, C Pickin and C Caple)	279
9.11	Coal	282
<b>10</b>	<b>Agricultural and dietary evidence</b>	
10.1	Food production and consumption in Wales: 13th to 15th centuries (by L Gidney and C Caple)	283
10.2	Animal and bird bones (by L Gidney)	295
10.3	Fish bones (by A Locker)	314
10.4	Shellfish (by J P Huntley)	318
10.5	Plant remains (by J P Huntley and J R G Daniell)	321
10.6	Charcoal (by C Caple, J Miller and S Ramsay)	336
10.7	Coprolites (by J R G Daniell)	338
10.8	Eggshell (by C Caple and L Gidney)	342
10.9	Organic residues (by J Reid, S N Dudd, M S Copley and R P Evershed)	343
<b>11</b>	<b>Conclusions</b>	349
	<b>Bibliography</b>	353
	<b>Index</b>	365

## LIST OF FIGURES

1.1	Location of Dryslwyn Castle, the Tywi valley, Cantref Mawr and Cantref Bychan	2
1.2	Dryslwyn Castle and township. Excavated areas 1980–95	4
1.3	Dryslwyn Castle. Excavated areas 1980–95	5
1.4	Drawing conventions	6
1.5	Dryslwyn Castle and town: phasing and dating summary	8
2.1	Principal English and Welsh masonry castles of the mid to late 13th century	18
2.2	Principal administrative divisions of west Wales in the late 13th century	19
2.3	Principal towns and monasteries in mid to late 13th-century Wales	20
2.4	Genealogy of the lords of Dryslwyn	21
2.5	Dryslwyn Castle: Phase 1	33
2.6	Dryslwyn Castle: Phase 2a–b	35
2.7	Dryslwyn Castle: Phase 2c–d	36
2.8	Dryslwyn Castle: Phase 3	37
2.9	Dryslwyn Castle: Phase 4a–b	39
2.10	Reconstruction of Dryslwyn Castle during Phase 2d, <i>c</i> 1240	39
3.1	Dryslwyn Castle: Phase 4c–d	49
3.2	Dryslwyn Castle: Phase 5a–b	50
3.3	Reconstruction of the Great Hall and apartments in the mid 14th century	51
3.4	Dryslwyn Castle: Phase 5c–d	52
3.5	Dryslwyn Castle: Phase 6	53
4.1	Areas D, E and P: Phases 1 and 2a	58
4.2	Areas D, E and P: reconstruction of the Round Tower D	59
4.3	Internal elevation of Round Tower D	60
4.4	External elevation of Round Tower D	62
4.5	Areas D, E and P: Phase 4a	63
4.6	The lancet windows in the north wall of the Great Chamber G	64
4.7	Areas D, E and P: Phase 4c–5c	65
4.8	Section D1, N–S section through Round Tower D	66
4.9	Section D2, E–W section through Round Tower D	66
4.10	Garderobe in wall (E2), with chutes (E9 and E17)	67
4.11	Elevation of the west face of wall (F2), N–S and E–W cross sections through the garderobe	68
4.12	Elevation of the west face of the revetment wall (P4) and the exterior face of the north wall of the Great Chamber G	69
4.13	Areas B, C and A: Phase 1	72
4.14	Areas B, C and A: Phase 2a	73
4.15	The mortared stone step (B106) at the entrance to the Phase 2a castle	74
4.16	Internal elevations of the passageway of the Gateway Area B	75
4.17	Areas B, C and A: Phase 3	76
4.18	Areas B, C and A: Phase 4	78
4.19	Elevation of the external east face of the east wall (A2) of the Inner Ward	79
4.20	Internal elevations of the raised platform area of the Gateway Area B	80
4.21	Elevation of the north wall (C6) south face and N–S cross section, Area C	82
4.22	Areas B, C and A: Phase 5	83
4.23	Mortar-floored guardhouse with charred timber sill beams (B21 and B22) and stone steps (B10)	84
4.24	The steps (C7) from which the stone treads have been removed (C48)	85
4.25	Areas B, C and A: development sequence of the castle/Inner Ward gateway	86
4.26	Areas I, J, K and L: Phase 2a	88
4.27	Elevation of the interior of the Great Hall K/L, north and south walls	89
4.28	Inner Ward Wall	90
4.29	Drain (K16)	91
4.30	Sections K1 and K2 through the construction of the drain (K16) in Area K	92
4.31	Areas I, J, K and L: Phases 2c–3a	93
4.32	South-facing Section L3 through the undercroft of the Great Hall K/L	94
4.33	Elevation. East end of the external face of the south wall of the Great Hall K/L, the west face of I/G wall (I171) and the west face of I/J wall (I5)	95

4.34	Remains of the steps (I15) leading up from the entrance to the Kitchen I (left) up to the original first-floor level of Great Hall K/L (right)	96
4.35	Areas I, J, K and L: Phase 4a	97
4.36	Elevation of the interior (north) face of the south wall of Area J	98
4.37	Section J1, through Area J	98
4.38	Reconstructed cross section through the Great Hall K/L and associated surfaces in Phase 2c	99
4.39	Reconstructed cross section through the Great Hall K/L, Apartments I/J and associated surfaces in Phase 4a	99
4.40	Offset in wall (L4) and socket (L59) in wall (L2) to support the wooden beam which carried the first floor level of the Great Hall K/L	100
4.41	Areas I, J, K and L: Phase 5	101
4.42	A lithic projectile from the 1287 siege in the foundations (J21) of wall (J5)	102
4.43	Section K4, through the floor layers beneath wall (K53)	103
4.44	Elevation. Interior of the Great Hall K/L, central stone pier (K55 and K56) and internal walls (K52, K53 and K54)	104
4.45	Section K5, through the lower rubble (K6) and the burning deposits (K9) filling the undercroft of the Great Hall K/L	105
4.46	Areas F, G, H and I: Phase 1	109
4.47	Elevation of the west face of the east wall (F2) of Area F	110
4.48	The eastern face of the western postern gate wall (H42) damaged by the removal of the hinge pillar	110
4.49	Areas F, G and H: Phase 2a. Stakehole structures	111
4.50	Areas F, G and H: Phase 2a. Post-built structures	112
4.51	Areas F, G and H: Phase 2c. Lower Clay Floor building	113
4.52	Step cut in the bedrock (G32) to create a flat seating for a sill beam cutting through the earlier post pits including (G203) and (G204)	114
4.53	Areas F, G and H: Phase 2c. Upper Clay Floor building	115
4.54	Areas F, G and H: Phase 3. Great Chamber G	116
4.55	Internal elevations of the west, north and east walls of the Great Chamber G	117
4.56	Base of the latrine pit (F23) showing the shovel full of white lime, thrown into the latrine to reduce the odour	118
4.57	Section F1, through the middens (F16 and F19) above the clay-floored buildings (F55/69) and (F84/88)	119
4.58	Areas F, G and H: Phase 4	120
4.59	Reconstruction of the long section through the Great Chamber G and Chapel H: Phase 4	121
4.60	Elevation of the north face of the south wall (H60) of Chapel H	121
4.61	Areas F, G and H: Phase 5	123
4.62	Collapsed slate roof layer (G12)	124
4.63	Areas M, O and P: Phases 1–2	127
4.64	Areas M, O and P: Phases 2–3	128
4.65	Elevations of the interior walls of the Prison M and the external east wall (M35)	129
4.66	Section O1, through the castle rubble collapse, the surfaces and foundations of the Courtyard O	130
4.67	Section O2, through the midden (O66) and soil and rubble fill beneath the Phase 4a mortar courtyard surface (O65)	130
4.68	Section M1, through the flooring levels of Prison M	131
4.69	Areas M, O and P: Phase 4	132
4.70	Courtyard mortar surface (O33), looking north	134
4.71	Fragment (O21) of the Round Tower D displaced during the castle's destruction	135
5.1	Principal features of the Middle Ward	138
5.2	Middle Ward: Phase 3d	139
5.3	Section Y1, through the flooring deposits beneath wall (Y4)	140
5.4	Section Y2, through the flooring deposits beneath wall (Y5)	140
5.5	Middle Ward: Phase 4	141
5.6	Buttress (R1) constructed to protect the projecting angle of the Middle Ward wall	142
5.7	Outer Ward, Castle Gatehouse W: Phase 4c	143
5.8	The only remaining substantial fragment of the Outer Ward wall (R2)	143
5.9	Section W1, through the Outer Ward wall	145

5.10	Mortared stone blocking (W12) of the arched gateway entrance (W10) to the Castle Gatehouse W	145
6.1	Wall (F2) with square stone block masonry	151
6.2	Mortar roof apex, pieces of clay daub and glazed floor tiles	154
6.3	Architectural stone summary	158
6.4	Red sandstone tracery and other decorative mouldings	159
6.5	Red sandstone window tracery	160
6.6	Reconstruction of the red sandstone cinquefoil ogee window	161
6.7	The creation of a sample of archaeological mortar	164
6.8	Mortar analysis	166
6.9	Normalised calcium oxide levels by phase	167
6.10	Painted wall-plaster fragments	168
6.11	Mineral pigments used in the painted wall plaster	169
6.12	Structural ironwork	172
6.13	Structural ironwork	173
6.14	Structural ironwork: door hinges and hinge pillars	174
6.15	Structural ironwork: door hinges	176
6.16	Structural ironwork: door hinges	177
6.17	Typology of medieval nails	178
6.18	Distribution of nails by type and area	182
7.1	15th-century illustration of handstones (Class 2 stones) being thrown at besiegers	193
7.2	Trebuchet trajectories in relation to Dryslwyn Castle and hill	196
7.3	Arrowheads and crossbow bolts (quarrels)	198
7.4	Arrowheads <b>W1–37</b>	202
7.5	Arrowheads <b>W38–63</b>	203
7.6	Arrowheads <b>W64–82</b>	204
7.7	Arrowheads <b>W83–92</b> , crossbow bolts and spearheads	205
7.8	Mid 13th-century copper-alloy macehead	207
7.9	Lithic projectiles	209
7.10	Slingstones	211
7.11	Lithic projectiles by weight	212
7.12	Trebuchet balls <b>LP44</b> (83SF13) and <b>LP45</b> (83SF4)	212
7.13	Illustration of a trebuchet drawn in 1316	213
8.1	The house walls (T13–15) constructed adjoining the town wall (T19–20)	220
8.2	Section through the worn centre of the house	220
8.3	Section Z1, through the fill of the town ditch (Z34) on the north-western side of the town	222
8.4	Section Z2, through the palisade trench (Z31)	223
8.5	Areas U, VA, VB and VC: Phases 4 and 5, Town Gatehouse U	224
8.6	The ‘Welsh’ town or settlement present in the third quarter of the 13th century	226
8.7	Aerial photograph of Dryslwyn township	227
8.8	The ‘English’ borough of the early 14th century	228
8.9	Likely locations of house sites in the early 14th-century borough	229
8.10	Reconstruction of Dryslwyn Castle and town <i>c</i> 1300	230
8.11	Features of the medieval landscape observable in the 19th and 20th centuries around Dryslwyn	231
9.1	Weight of recovered pottery by phase and fabric group	237
9.2	Weight of recovered pottery by area and fabric group	238
9.3	Illustrated pottery details	239
9.4	Pottery	240
9.5	Pottery	242
9.6	Pottery	244
9.7	Ironwork: tools	248
9.8	Ironwork	251
9.9	Ironwork: locks and keys	252
9.10	Ironwork: knives	253
9.11	Ironwork: horseshoes and buckles	254
9.12	Ironwork	255
9.13	Copper-alloy and lead artefacts	258
9.14	Copper-alloy artefacts	260

9.15	Copper-alloy artefacts	261
9.16	Bone, antler, ivory artefacts	267
9.17	Bone, antler, ivory artefacts	269
9.18	Bone, antler, ivory artefacts	270
9.19	Bone, antler, ivory artefacts	271
9.20	Stone artefacts used in food preparation	274
9.21	Honestones	276
9.22	Stone and miscellaneous artefacts	278
9.23	Quernstone 92SF168	279
9.24	Distribution of metalworking residues by area, phase and type	280
9.25	Principal adsorption bands of waxy deposits and comparative samples	281
10.1	Bone fragment counts for the mammal species present by area (excluding Area F)	296
10.2	Bone fragment counts for the mammal species present in Area F, by phase	297
10.3	Total numbers of identified larger mammal bone fragments, by phase and area	297
10.4	Total numbers of identified bird bone fragments, by phase and area	298
10.5	Bone fragment counts for the mammal species present by phase (excluding Area F)	299
10.6	Proportion of ungulates from bone fragment counts by phase (excluding Area F)	300
10.7	Tooth wear data for cattle (excluding Area F)	302
10.8	Small mammal and amphibian bones by phase	309
10.9	Bone fragment counts for the bird species present by phase in Area F	310
10.10	Bone fragment counts for the bird species present by phase (excluding Area F)	311
10.11	Proportions of immature fowl bones by phase	312
10.12	Bone fragment counts for the fish species present in Phases 1a–6d	315
10.13	Bone fragment counts for the fish species present in contexts (F23), (F19), (F15) and (F16)	316
10.14	Scanning electron micrograph of a plaice vertebra from a latrine deposit distorted as a result of being bitten	317
10.15	Mollusc shells recovered from stratified contexts, by phase	319
10.16	Frequency of oyster shell size by phase	320
10.17	Contexts with significant numbers of oyster shells	320
10.18	Plant remains recovered from Phase 1 contexts	321
10.19	Plant remains recovered from Phase 2 contexts	322
10.20	Plant remains recovered from Phase 3 contexts	323
10.21	Plant remains recovered from Phase 4 contexts	324
10.22	Plant remains recovered from Phase 5 and 6 contexts	325
10.23	Plant remains recovered in laboratory conditions from selected contexts	326
10.24	Comparison of taxa recovered through ‘on site’ and laboratory processing	327
10.25	Charred plant remains recovered from ‘destruction’ deposits	330
10.26	Scanning electron micrograph of a fennel seed	331
10.27	Plant details from Ministers Accounts: royal income and expenditure related to the garrison at Dryslwyn Castle (from Rhys 1936)	334
10.28	Wood species present as charcoal, by context	337
10.29	Large ‘beam’ charcoal samples	338
10.30	Percentages of the major wood species present as charcoal	338
10.31	Coprolite samples, weight and intestinal parasite egg numbers	339
10.32	Human coprolite that was found to contain <i>Tricuris sp.</i> eggs and a dog coprolite containing large pieces of bone	340
10.33	Micrographs of types of parasite egg found in Dryslwyn Castle samples	341
10.34	Scanning electron micrograph of a fly puparia from the latrine context (F23)	342
10.35	Dimensions of <i>Tricurid sp.</i> eggs from Dryslwyn Castle	342
10.36	Ceramic sherds used for organic residue analysis and their lipid content	345
10.37	HT/GC Chromatograms of total lipid extract from samples D4, D24 and D12	346
10.38	Plot of the $\delta^{13}\text{C}$ values of reference fats and Dryslwyn Castle samples	347

## GLOSSARY

<i>anrheg</i>	A gift of food designed to impress the recipient, usually meat.
<i>arghwydd</i>	Lord. The use of the term <i>brenin</i> (king) to describe the leaders of the traditional kingdoms of Gwynedd, Powys and Deheubarth ceased during the mid 12th century with the acceptance of the overlordship of Henry II and the term <i>arghwydd</i> came into use (Pierce 1972, 28). Llywelyn ap Iowerth (d. 1240) and Llywelyn ap Gruffudd (d. 1282), Lords of Gwynedd, used the term prince ( <i>princeps</i> ) when they effectively controlled <i>pura Wallie</i> .
commote	Traditional local land division, a sub division of the cantref (Davies 1987, 20–21).
cantref	Traditional Welsh land division (pl: cantrefi). Legal, economic and social structures were based on the cantref and its sub divisions (Davies 1987, 20–21).
<i>commorth</i>	Periodic render of cattle to the lord.
<i>dawnbywd</i>	Food render to the lord, normally from bondmen ( <i>taeogs</i> ).
Deheubarth	Lands of the modern day counties of Carmarthenshire, Ceredigion and parts of east Pembrokeshire (Turvey 2002, xxv; Rees 1951, plate 30).
<i>dofraeth</i>	Food render to the lord, often oats, normally from freemen.
<i>golwython</i>	An impressive dish of food at the start of the feast.
<i>gwestfa</i>	Food render to the lord's court normally from freemen (Charles-Edwards <i>et al</i> 2000, 567; Rees 1924, 10–12).
<i>hendre-hafod</i>	Winter valley pastures and summer mountain grazing, the system of transhumance, moving cattle between these feeding grounds.
<i>llu</i>	The lord's host or army, comprising all those (freemen) who were required to serve their lord (Davies 2004, 50–84).
<i>llys</i>	Lord's court. It may refer both to the physical (hall, lords chamber and associated buildings within a defensive perimeter) and the social structure (people and rituals of the court).
<i>maerdref</i>	The lord's settlement associated with working the lord's demesne land.
<i>marchia Wallie</i>	Lands along the eastern and southern sides of Wales held by Anglo-Norman lords following the Norman invasion (Turvey 2002, xxvi).
<i>neuadd</i>	Hall.
pannage	Grazing of pigs during the Autumn in the lord's woods, and the payment in pigs due for this.
<i>pura Wallia</i>	Lands under Welsh control during the 13th century prior to 1283, where Welsh law and social structures were present (Turvey 2002, xxvi).
<i>rhaglaw, rhingyll</i>	Officer of the commote, collecting rents, later known as the beadle (Rees 1924, 95–103).
<i>teulu</i>	Lord's household warriors, his war band (Davies 2004, 14–49).
<i>tref</i>	Settlement and associated land.
<i>uchelwyr</i>	Noble householder, significant freeman, minor aristocracy.
Welshry	Areas of Welsh control, where Welsh laws were implemented, the term would be applied to Wales as a whole and individual lordships.
<i>ystafell</i>	The chamber or private living space of the lord.

### Place names

A confusing mixture of English and Welsh spellings of place names are used in almost all modern publications: Cardiff rather than Caerdydd, but the River Tywi rather than Towy. In this publication place names are used with either English or Welsh spelling depending on normal usage c2000–06. Castle names are normally from Avent's *Castles of the Princes of Gwynedd* and King's *Castellarium Anglicanum*. The cantref and commote names are from Rees's *An historical atlas of Wales: from early to modern times*.

In his book *The age of conquest*, Prof R R Davies commented on this subject that 'The existence of alternative place names and of alternative spelling of place names is a reflection of the emergence of that duality of culture and language within Wales which is one of the themes of this volume' (Davies 1987, xiv). This duality of language and culture continues to evolve into the third millennium and is reflected in this publication.

## SUMMARY

Excavations at Dryslwyn between 1980 and 1995 uncovered a masonry castle, founded in the late 1220s by Rhys Gryg for his son Maredudd ap Rhys, the first Lord of Dryslwyn. The first castle was a simple round tower and polygonal walled enclosure, which subsequently included a kitchen, prison and wood-framed, clay-floored great chamber beside a great hall. In the mid 13th century a second ward was added and the great chamber rebuilt in stone. This castle was greatly expanded in the period 1283–87 by Rhys ap Maredudd, the second and final Lord of Dryslwyn, who added an Outer Ward and gatehouse. He also rebuilt much of the Inner Ward, adding an extra storey to the great hall and great chamber and a series of apartments and a chapel along the south side of the great hall. Thus at the end of the 13th century a large three-ward castle stretched along the eastern and southern edge of the hill while the rest of the hilltop was occupied by a settlement defended by a wall and substantial ditch with access through a gatehouse. This castle and its associated settlement were besieged and captured in 1287 by an English royal army of over 11,000 men following damage inflicted by a trebuchet and mining of the walls.

During the Welsh lordly period, the castle was the home of the lords of Dryslwyn, their family and retainers, as well as the administrative centre of a lordship, which between 1285 and 1287 was as large as present day Carmarthenshire. Throughout the 14th century the English Crown garrisoned and repaired the castle, supervised by an appointed constable. This castle was surrendered to Owain Glyn Dŵr in 1403 and at some point in the early to mid 15th century was deliberately walled up to deny its use to a potential enemy. It was subsequently looted, burnt and deliberately demolished.

By the late 13th century, though possibly from its initial construction, the castle had a white rendered and lime-washed appearance, creating a very dramatic and highly visible symbol of lordship. Internally, the lord's and guest apartments had decorative wall paintings and glazed windows. Evidence from charred beams still *in situ*, the sizes, shapes and distribution of nails, sheet lead, slates and postholes recovered during excavation has enabled some of the wooden as well as masonry buildings to be reconstructed. Waterlogged deposits had preserved a rich assemblage of seeds, birds, fish and animal bone which reveal evidence of the dining habits of Welsh lords, their guests and household. They frequently consumed young veal calves and sucking pig, marine and fresh water fish, wild birds and shellfish, oatcakes and breads as well as local and imported fruit. A unique example of a 15th-century quill from a pen, together with the published 14th-century accounts of the castle (Rhys 1936) and unpublished records collected by E A Lewis (*NLW Add MS 455D*) demonstrate the administrative role of the site.

Though crossbows dominate in the castle armoury accounts after 1287 and throughout the 14th century, the recovery of 92 armour-piercing arrowheads from Dryslwyn Castle indicates that the longbow was the principal weapon in use. These were almost certainly 'personal' weapons owned by individual bowmen, whereas crossbows were supplied by the state for the use of troops. A rare bronze knob-headed mace was also recovered from a mid 13th-century context whilst two of the three spearheads and the majority of arrowheads come from contexts associated with the siege. Damage and repairs to the castle walls can be correlated with historic accounts while three stone balls recovered by the excavation were undoubtedly thrown by the trebuchet, details of whose construction are recorded in the royal accounts of expenditure during 1287. Lithic projectiles, from slingstones to the trebuchet balls, provide evidence for both defence and attack.

## RESUMEN

Las excavaciones desarrolladas entre 1980 y 1995 en Dryslwyn descubrieron el castillo de piedra construido a finales de los años 1220 por Rhys Gryg para su hijo Maredudd ap Rhys, primer señor de Dryslwyn. El primer castillo consistió en una simple torre redonda y un área poligonal murada que incluiría la cocina, prisión y una gran sala, de suelo de tierra batida y paredes de tapial, situada junto al gran salón. A mediados del siglo XIII se añadió un segundo patio a la vez que la gran sala se reconstruyó a base de piedra. Durante 1283 y 1287 Rhys ap Maredudd, el segundo y último señor de Dryslwyn, agrandó el castillo, añadiendo un patio exterior y torreón de entrada. Además reconstruyó parte del patio interior, añadiendo un piso superior al gran salón y sala, junto con una serie de habitaciones y capilla en el lado sur del gran salón. A finales del siglo XIII el castillo de Dryslwyn con sus tres patios se erigió en el extremo de una colina, cuya pendiente estaba ocupada por un asentamiento defendido por muros y una gran zanja, con acceso a través de una entrada defendida. En 1287 el castillo y su población adjunta fueron sitiados y capturados por un ejército real inglés de más de 11.000 hombres, con la ayuda de zapas y ataques con catapultas.

Durante el señorío galés, el castillo fue tanto residencia de los señores de Dryslwyn, sus familias y séquito, como fue también centro administrativo del señorío, tan grande entre 1285 y 1287 como el actual condado de Carmarthenshire. Durante el siglo XIV la corona inglesa ocupó y reparó el castillo bajo la supervisión de un condestable. El castillo se rindió en 1403 a Owain Glyn Dŵr, y seguidamente sus muros fueron recrecidos deliberadamente para evitar que fuera utilizado por un posible enemigo. Poco más tarde fue saqueado, quemado y demolido deliberadamente.

En el siglo XIII, y posiblemente ya desde el momento de su construcción, el castillo estuvo lavado en yeso y recubierto de cal blanca, creando así un símbolo de señorío muy dramático y visible. En cuanto al interior, las habitaciones del señor y visitantes estuvieron decoradas con pinturas murales y ventanas con cristales. Gracias a los restos de vigas quemadas *in situ*, tamaños, formas y distribución de los clavos encontrados, piezas de plomo, pizarras y elementos excavados se han podido reconstruir los edificios que integraron el castillo, tanto los de madera como los de piedra. Además, los depósitos anegados han preservado una rica colección de semillas y restos de fauna que pone en evidencia los hábitos de la mesa del señor del castillo, sus invitados y sirvientes. Ellos se sirvieron frecuentemente de ternera lechal y cochinillo, pescado fresco y marino, pájaros, marisco, panes y fruta importada. En cuanto al papel administrativo del castillo, éste queda claramente evidenciado gracias al ejemplar único de una plumilla del siglo XV, junto con las cuentas del siglo XIV (publicadas por Rhys 1936) y otros documentos recogidos por E A Lewis (*NLW Add MS 455D*).

Aunque son las ballestas las que dominan en las cuentas del castillo tras 1287 y durante todo el siglo XIV, durante las excavaciones se encontraron 92 puntas de flecha cuya presencia indica que el arco fue el arma predilecta. Éstas serían seguramente armas de uso personal, propiedad de cada arquero, mientras que las ballestas eran suministradas por el estado para el uso de las tropas. También se encontró una maza de bronce, ejemplar muy raro, en un contexto de mediados del siglo XIII, mientras que las tres punta de lanza y la mayoría de las puntas de flecha aparecieron en contextos asociados con el asalto de 1287. Daños y reparos acaecidos en los muros del castillo pueden ser asociados con sucesos históricos específicos; no hay duda, por ejemplo, que las tres bolas de piedra encontradas durante la excavación fueron lanzadas por una catapulta cuya construcción ha quedado documentada en los gastos de 1287. Los proyectiles de piedra recuperados ofrecen evidencia clara tanto del ataque como de la defensa del castillo.

## RÉSUMÉ

Les fouilles archéologiques de Dryslwyn entre 1980 et 1995 ont mis au jour un château maçonné, fondé à la fin des années 1220 par Rhys Gryg pour son fils Maredudd ap Rhys, le premier seigneur de Dryslwyn. Le premier château était constitué d'une simple tour circulaire et d'une enceinte murée polygonale qui renferma plus tard une cuisine, une prison et une camera en bois dont le sol était en terre battue, située à côté d'une aula. Au milieu du XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle, une seconde salle fut ajoutée et la camera fut reconstruite en pierre. Ce château fut largement agrandi au cours de la période 1283–87 par Rhys ap Maredudd, le second et dernier seigneur de Dryslwyn, qui fit ajouter une Salle Extérieure et une guérite. Il fit aussi reconstruire la majeure partie de la Salle Intérieure, ajoutant un étage supplémentaire à l'aula et à la camera, ainsi qu'une série d'appartements et une capella le long du côté sud de l'aula. Ainsi, à la fin du XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle, un grand château à trois salles s'étendait le long des flancs est et sud de la colline tandis que le reste du sommet de la colline était occupé par un établissement défendu par une enceinte et un fossé avec un accès par la guérite. Ce château et l'établissement qui lui était associé furent assiégés et pris en 1287 par une armée royale anglaise de plus de 11000 hommes, suite aux dommages infligés par un trébuchet et à la sape des murs.

Au cours de la période de règne galloise, le château fut la résidence des seigneurs de Dryslwyn, de leur famille et de leurs domestiques, ainsi que le centre administratif de la seigneurie, qui, entre 1285 et 1287, fut aussi importante que l'actuel Carmarthenshire. Au cours du XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle la Couronne Anglaise mit en garnison et répara le château, dirigé par un gouverneur nommé. Ce château fut cédé à Owain Glyn Dŵr en 1403 et dans la première moitié du XV<sup>e</sup> siècle, il fut intentionnellement bloqué pour éviter qu'il ne soit pris par tout ennemi potentiel. Il fut par la suite pillé, brûlé et volontairement démoli.

À la fin du XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle, l'aspect blanchi à la chaux du château produisait un symbole relativement dramatique et ostentatoire de la seigneurie. À l'intérieur, les appartements du seigneur et de ses hôtes disposaient de peintures murales décoratives et de vitraux. Des indices de poutres carbonisées toujours *in situ*, les dimensions, les formes et la répartition des clous, des plaques de plomb, des ardoises et des trous de poteaux mis au jour lors de la fouille ont permis la reconstitution de bâtiments en bois, ainsi que de ceux en pierre. Des dépôts imbibés d'eau ont conservé un ensemble riche de graines, d'ossements d'oiseaux et d'animaux et des arêtes de poisson qui ont révélé le mode alimentaire des seigneurs gallois, de leurs hôtes et des gens du logis. Ils consommaient fréquemment de jeunes veaux et du porc, du poisson marin et d'eau douce, des oiseaux sauvages et des fruits de mer, des gâteaux à base d'orge, du pain, ainsi que des fruits locaux et importés. L'exemple unique de plume à écrire du XV<sup>e</sup> siècle,

ainsi que les comptes publiés du XIVe siècle du château (Rhys 1936) et les documents non-publiés réunis par E A Lewis (*NLW Add MS 455D*), témoigne du rôle administratif du site.

Bien que les arbalètes dominent les comptes de l'arsenal du château après 1287 et au cours du XIVe siècle, la découverte à Dryslwyn Castle de quatre-vingt douze pointes de flèche pouvant percer une armure indiquent que l'arc était l'arme la plus employée. Il s'agissait presque certainement d'armes personnelles appartenant individuellement aux archers, tandis que les arbalètes étaient fournies aux troupes par l'état. Une massue exceptionnelle avec un bouton en bronze fut aussi mise au jour dans un contexte du milieu du XIIIe siècle. Deux des trois fers de lance et la majorité des pointes de flèche proviennent de contextes associés au siège. Les dommages et réparations des murs du château peuvent être corrélés avec les comptes historiques. Trois boulets de pierre mis au jour lors des fouilles ont sans aucun doute été lancés par le trébuchet, dont des détails de la construction sont consignés dans les comptes royaux des dépenses de 1287. Les projectiles lithiques, des lance-pierre aux boulets de trébuchets, constituent des indices sur les aspects défensifs et offensifs de ce site.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This work is dedicated to my father Raymond Francis Caple who fired my enthusiasm for archaeology and whose energy and commitment has done so much both to aid this excavation and archaeology in Wales.

Thanks must be personally accorded to Peter Webster, the initial director of excavations at Dryslwyn, for giving me the opportunity to take over this project; Peter has continued to act as my mentor throughout this endeavour. Thanks also go to Cadw and its inspectors Sian Rees and Rick Turner who supported the excavation from first to last. It is a tribute to Cadw's commitment to the archaeology of Wales that this project has been fully funded from its humble beginnings through to final publication. The Department of Archaeology, Durham University, has also contributed significantly to the project, providing scientific and conservation facilities, authors for several sections and especially funding and staff time to complete the final stages of the report. At this point I would like to pay particular tribute to the late Richard Avent, Principal Inspector of Ancient Monument at Cadw, who tragically died whilst the editing of this report was taking place. Richard was a great friend and supporter of the excavation; for a number of years Dryslwyn and Richard's excavation at Laugharne shared accommodation at Trinity College Carmarthen and many evenings of stimulating discussion. He provided advice and encouragement throughout the project; his support, friendship and guidance will be greatly missed.

In undertaking this work I have been greatly aided by a number of colleagues. In particular Tony Spence, for many years my deputy director, and Olly Jessop who was site assistant, post-excavation assistant and draughtsman. They have provided the energy, enthusiasm, logical order and the sheer variety of archaeological skills necessary to get this project from the earth to the word. Over the years we have been assisted by many other individuals; excavation supervisors Carol Spence, Norman Redhead, Brian Williams and Alan Thomas laboured physically and mentally to make sense of this site. Our finds supervisors Roz Cooper and, in particular Norma Hancock, kept the excavation going in a million and one ways and provided the voice of humanity and sanity that we all need to hear sometimes. I am grateful to all the authors of the specialist reports, their efforts and expertise, which have yielded a great deal of additional information about the site. Only through the work of colleagues such as the late Ian Goodall does an accurate and detailed picture of life in the medieval past emerge. I would like to thank colleagues Christopher Gerrard and Simon Draper for editing and correcting my manuscript, their efforts have been essential in creating a readable report.

Finally I must especially thank all the volunteers who laboured so long and hard on what has often been a demanding site. The spirit of the excavation volunteer was undoubtedly best exemplified by the late Russ Taylor whose enthusiasm as a volunteer from the very early years of this project never waned even on the longest and hottest day. It is a tribute to him and every other volunteer who worked on this site that this was such an enjoyable excavation over so many years.



**Taylor & Francis**

Taylor & Francis Group

<http://taylorandfrancis.com>

# EXCAVATION HISTORY AND PROCESSES

## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

The picturesque ruin of Dryslwyn Castle, perched at the southern end of Dryslwyn hill overlooking the River Tywi has attracted antiquarians, visitors and artists from the 18th century to the present day. The hill on which the ruins lie is located 22km east of Carmarthen and 12km west of Llandeilo (SN554203; Figure 1.1) and virtually the whole of the valley between these two towns is visible from the summit. The antiquity of the site, particularly as the castle stronghold of the Lords of Dryslwyn, who played such an important role in the late 13th-century history of Wales, has long been recognised. The site features in almost every history of the county (Lloyd 1935), as well as in accounts of medieval Wales and Britain in the 13th century (Davies 1987; Morris 1901; Prestwich 1988; Powicke 1962). Though much of the available medieval documentary evidence related to this site was collected and collated in 1907 by the historian E A Lewis and is now lodged in the National Library of Wales (*NLW Add MS 455D*), no archaeological excavation had been undertaken prior to 1980.

This monograph describes the results of the excavation of Dryslwyn Castle undertaken between 1980 and 1995, which provided a large volume of new historical and archaeological detail about life in, and the construction of, a castle in 13th- and early 14th-century Wales. In contrast to the limited archaeological data from Welsh castles such as Dolwyddelan (Conwy) or Castell-y-Bere (Gwynedd) (Butler 1974, 80), which suffered poorly recorded excavation and restoration work in the 19th and earlier 20th century, the medieval archaeological deposits at Dryslwyn were fortuitously preserved intact beneath the castle's destruction. This allowed modern excavation to reveal the full sequence of construction and occupation activity on this site while coins, imported ceramics and details of architectural form have enabled this sequence to be dated. Detailed recording, including stone by stone drawings

of every upstanding masonry wall, has ensured this record remains for future generations to study, since the act of preservation and restoration of extant remains invariably results in the loss of information.

Briefly, excavation and historical research indicate that Dryslwyn Castle was founded in the late 1220s by Rhys Gryg to provide a protected home for his new son Maredudd. The castle was then developed by Maredudd ap Rhys (1220s–71), the first Lord of Dryslwyn, and further enlarged by his son Rhys ap Maredudd (1240s–92), the last Lord of Dryslwyn. By 1287 Rhys had gained lands due to his support of the English Crown in the war between Edward I and Llywelyn ap Gruffudd equivalent to modern day Carmarthenshire and had developed Dryslwyn into a large three-ward castle, with an associated defended town, similar to many large English baronial castles. Surviving archaeological evidence creates a picture of Rhys and his entourage seated in a great hall feasting on a wide range of local animals, birds and fish, eating imported fruits and drinking imported wine in fine French ceramics. Some rooms had wall-paintings. The sophisticated nature of the military architecture, such as the castle gatehouse, which alone of the Welsh castles had an entrance guarded with double gate and portcullis either end of a gate passage, betrays a blend of both Marcher and Welsh influences.

The Welsh lordly period of construction and occupation ended in 1287 when Rhys rose in revolt against the Crown. The records of the English Crown detail the costs of men and materials used in this siege, which can be compared to the archaeological evidence, for the physical reality of this event and its aftermath. This has enabled a detailed picture of the longest siege of any Welsh castle to be established. Later, Dryslwyn became a garrisoned castle of the English Crown. Historic records and archaeological evidence for food consumption, repairs and construction reveal a castle in gentle decline, being minimally maintained throughout the 14th century. After the hiatus of the revolt of Owain Glyn Dŵr, the historical record falls silent.

DRYSLWYN CASTLE

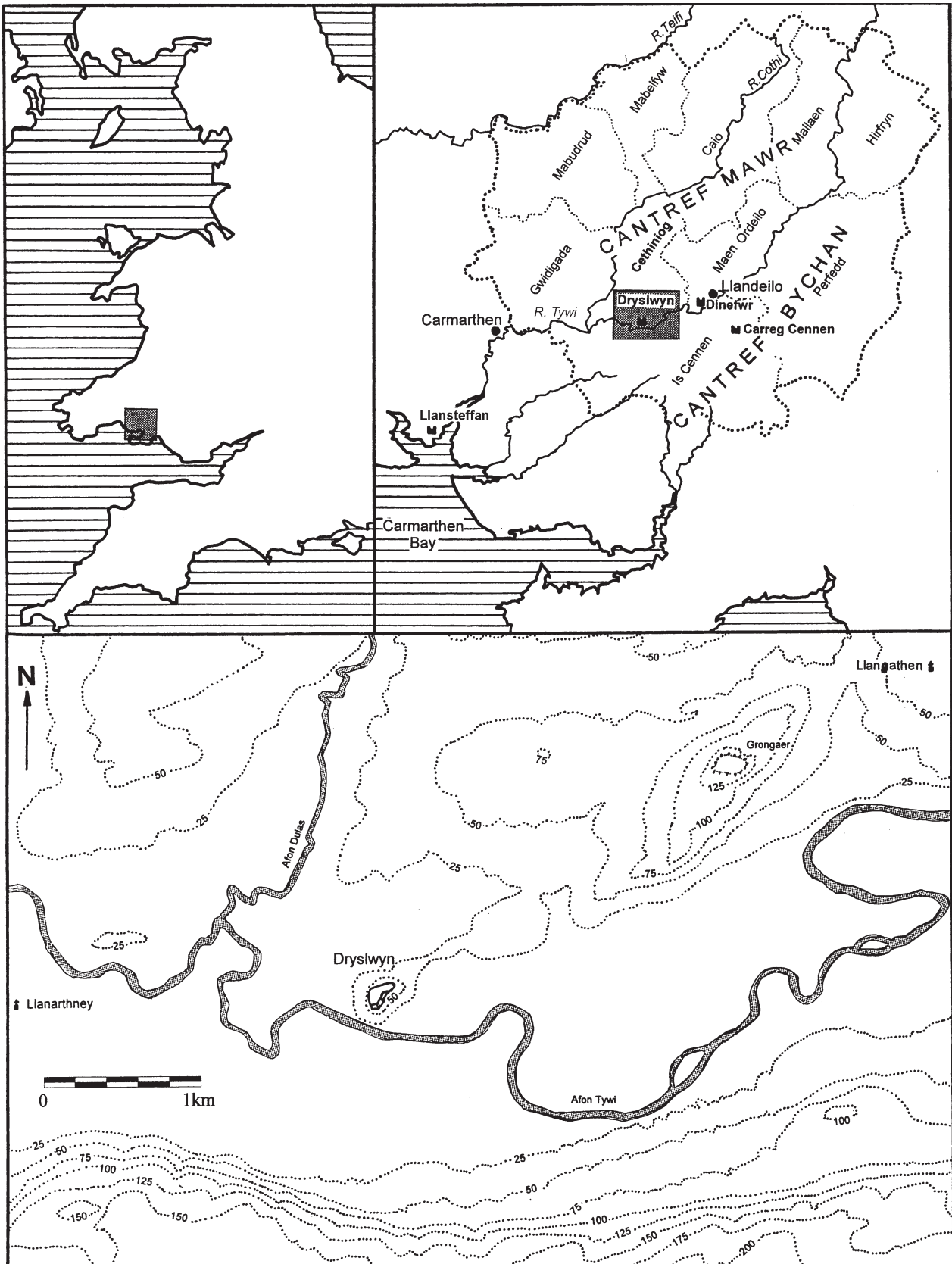


FIGURE 1.1

*Location of Dryslwyn Castle, the Tywi Valley, Cantref Mawr and Cantref Bychan*

The archaeology, however, reveals a detailed picture of closing the castle, including the blocking of gateways and entrances, followed by looting, then an all-consuming fire, before the castle was deliberately demolished, so sealing its medieval occupation. On the hilltop beside the castle, historical evidence indicates a defended settlement or town prior to 1287 to which archaeological evidence adds the detail of a complex sequence of house and defence construction. By 1300 this was the borough of Dryslwyn, a township of around 200 souls, the third largest town in Carmarthenshire and Cardiganshire.

As we shall see, perhaps the most remarkable evidence to emerge from this excavation is the sheer size, scale and speed of the construction at Dryslwyn, which developed from a bare hillside in the 1220s to a highly sophisticated castle and associated town in only 70 years. This indicates not only the power and position of the lords of Dryslwyn, but is indicative of the economic expansion of Wales as a whole in the 13th century. The development of other Welsh sites such as Dolforwyn (Powys), Castell-y-Bere (Gwynedd) and Newcastle Emllyn (Carmarthenshire) may be equally rapid, whilst existing centres such as Carmarthen and Cardigan also show expansion.

## 1.2 THE EXCAVATION

Dryslwyn Hill with its attendant ruined castle was transferred from the Cawdor estate into the care of the Secretary of State for Wales as an Ancient Monument in 1979. The Welsh Office, Ancient Monuments Branch, as Cadw (Welsh Historic Monuments) after 1984, then funded archaeological excavation under the directorship of Peter Webster, lecturer in Archaeology, Department of Extra Mural Studies at University College Cardiff, University of Wales, in 1980, ahead of consolidation of the masonry. The author of this report, originally the deputy director, directed the excavations from 1984 until 1995. Excavation work was carried out for three to four weeks every summer. The volunteers were initially adult education students attending Peter Webster's classes. In later years students, principally from the Department of Archaeology, Durham University, undertook much of the work. Their efforts revealed a castle buried in several metres of masonry rubble with substantial walls still standing and 13th- and 14th-century archaeological deposits. Though a mechanical excavator removed some of the rubble between the 1981 and 1982 seasons, almost all the excavation was by hand.

The hill itself is composed of Ordovician limestone interleaved with thin bands of shale. The limestone from the hillside was quarried for stone for the castle and burnt to make the lime mortar that adhered the masonry together. Limited remains of stonework were visible on the southern edge of the hill when the excavation commenced (Webster 1981b, 34). At that

time survey work by Ray Caple and Peter Webster suggested a substantial castle extended across the eastern ridge of the hill with a substantial fortified town covering the rest of the hilltop (Webster 1987, 103).

The aims of the excavation were to completely excavate the Inner Ward of the castle to reveal a visitable monument and to conduct excavations throughout the castle and town in order to determine the date and nature of the occupation and construction activity on the site. It was also considered important for the present and future management of this site to reveal the extent and nature of the archaeological deposits on the site and to excavate any areas which might be damaged by the construction of paths and steps, required to facilitate visitor access.

Initially a series of rectangular trenches, numbered 01 to 13, were laid out across the site between 1980 and 1983 over areas of potential archaeological interest (Caple and Jessop 1997, fig 5). Individual contexts (features/layers) were numbered for each trench. In 1984 the site was reorganised using the existing buildings and areas of the castle, which were given alphabetic letters again with numbered contexts (Figures 1.2 and 1.3). This facilitated excavation of the Inner Ward of the castle room by room, building by building but meant that some dividing walls have two or even three area/context codes. All the records of the 1980–83 excavation were converted into the new site code system and the finds were re-labelled. All contexts (walls, layers, postholes) were recorded on context sheets and, where appropriate, were photographed and recorded on plans and sections. The plans, sections, photographs and details of finds recovered from each context, plus a day diary kept by each area supervisor, have been bound together in files for each area, to form an accessible and usable archaeological archive. Alphabetical area and numerical context codes have been employed throughout this report e.g. (C16), together with the descriptive name of the building to facilitate accuracy and understanding (for example, Round Tower D). Significant finds, such as arrowheads, were given a unique small find numbers comprising: the year, the initials SF and a sequential number (90SF9). In this report they are referred to also by their catalogue number, e.g. [M79]. Throughout the excavation regular interim reports on the progress of the excavation were provided to Cadw and published in a variety of locations (Webster 1980; 1981a; 1981b; 1982a; 1982b; 1982c; 1983a; 1983b; 1984; 1987; Webster and Caple 1983; Caple 1985a; 1985b; 1990a; 1990b; 1991; 1992a; 1992b; 1993a; 1993b; 1993c; 1994a; 1994b; 1996a; 1996b; Caple and Denison 1994; Caple and Jessop 1996). The castle fully opened to the public in August 1996, and a guidebook was published in 1999 (Rees and Caple 1999).

The Inner Ward was fully excavated, consequently clear conclusions regarding the sequence of construction and dating have been reached. The limited excavation possible in the Middle and Outer Wards

DRYSLWYN CASTLE

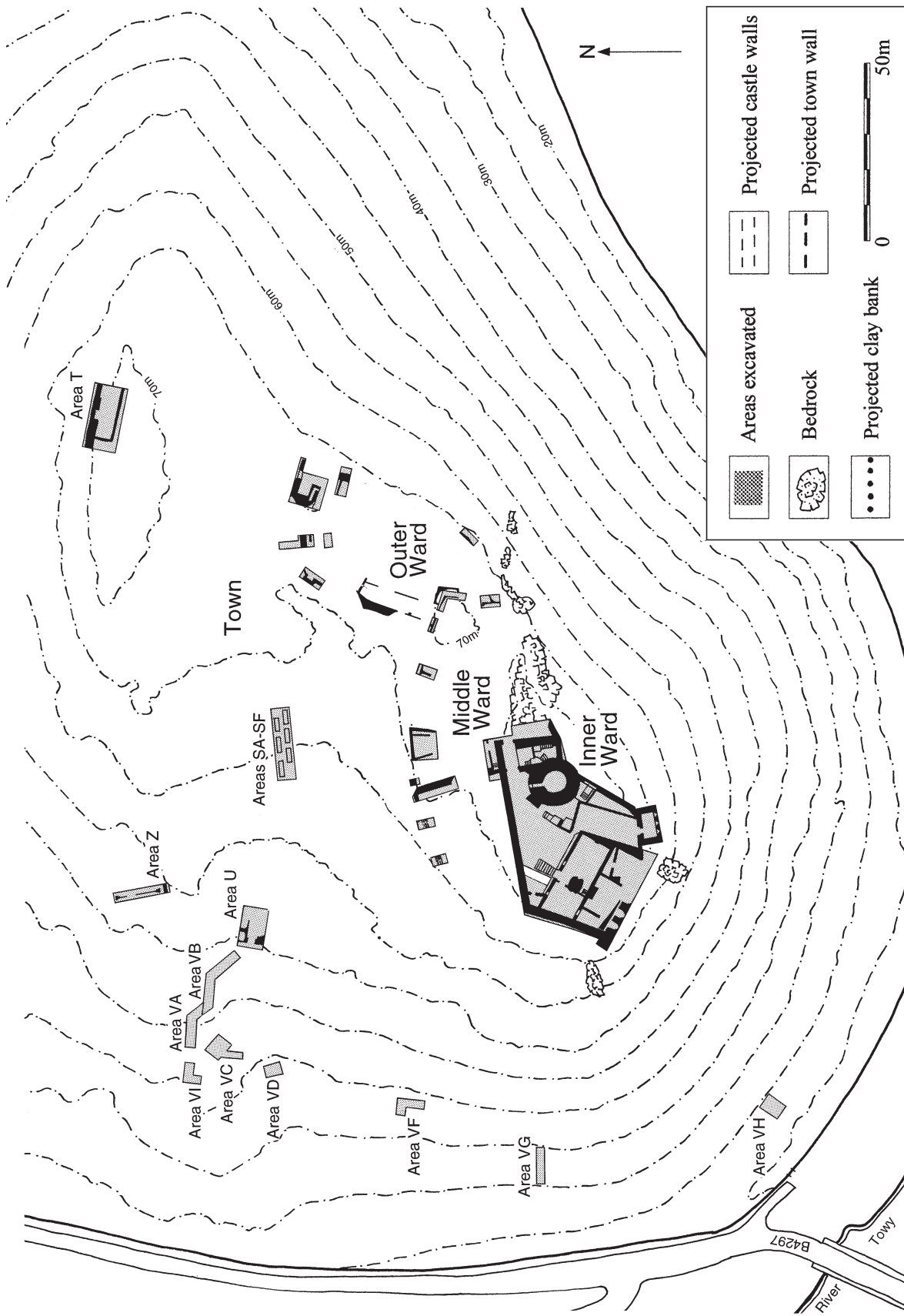


FIGURE 1.2  
 Dryslwyn Castle and township. Excavated areas 1980-95

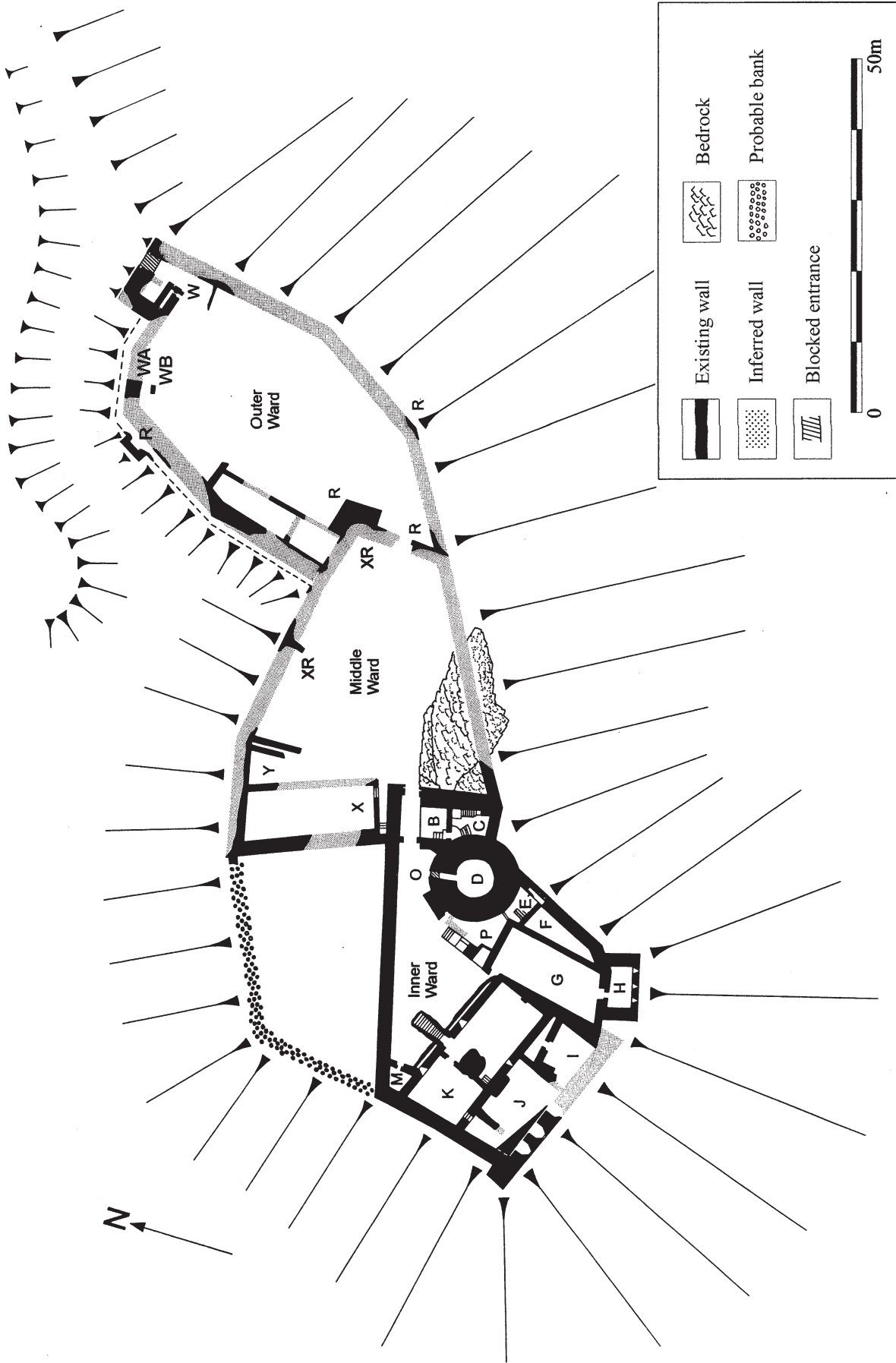





































FIGURE 1.3  
 Dryshwyn Castle. Excavated areas 1980-95

Key to plans:

	Bedrock		Roofing slate rubble		Lime
	Polished bedrock		Limestone rubble		Brown earth
	Flattened bedrock		Occupation deposit	dark	light
	Mortar surface		Ash		Clay
	Cobble		Crushed slate		Existing wall
	Stake holes		Burning/charcoal		Wall constructed during individual phase
					Wall not visible in phase

Key to sections:

	Topsoil		Shale		Mortar
	Charcoal		Boulder clay		Slate
	Clay and decayed shale		Orange/brown clay		Crushed slate
	Mottled red/orange clay		Masonry wall (section only)		Grey clay
	Charcoal layer		Limestone bedrock		Mortar floor
	Limestone rocks		Brown earth		
		dark	light		

Key to elevations:







	Render		Broken floor slab		Offset or edge
	Exposed wall core		Hole to receive wooden beam		CADW tile

FIGURE 1.4

*Drawing conventions*

and township has meant that only tentative conclusions regarding the development of these parts of the site have been possible. Only bone, stone, ceramic and highly corroded metal finds survived buried in the thin aerated limy soil and limestone building rubble of the site. However, seeds (some charred or mineralised) and small bones were recovered from pockets of waterlogged soil present in a number of pits and late 13th-century kitchen middens above the clay-floored buildings in Area F. Very lightly corroded metal artefacts and charred seeds were also preserved in the oxygen-free soil conditions created by the burning deposits which formed in the base of the Great Hall K/L, Round Tower D and Great Chamber G when the castle was set alight prior to demolition in the 15th century.

Small finds were principally conserved in the laboratories at Cardiff University (1980–85) and Durham University (1988–95). All the upstanding walls were recorded on stone-by-stone drawings. With the exception of the architectural stone fragments, which were drawn, photographed and recorded on site before being re-buried in the Prison M, all the ceramic, glass, metal, stone and bone artefacts, plus a sample of the animal bone and seed evidence, were deposited in Abergwilli Museum after study.

The responsibility of primary editing and interpretation of all the specialist reports, the analysis of the site and all its evidence and then creating the excavation report which follows has fallen to its principal author. It is acknowledged that every excavator and interpreter of the past is biased by their own experience, the physical remains they recover, the culture in which they live and work and the state of knowledge at the time in which they are writing (Stocker 1992). The full detailed accounts of the excavation, area by area, plus the phased Harris matrices and the full specialist reports were assembled in 2002 into a three-volume archive level report entitled *A Welsh lord's castle of the 13th century: Dryslwyn Castle excavations 1980–1995*, by Chris Caple. Copies of which were deposited with Cadw and Abergwilli Museum. All excavation archive, including specialist reports, has been deposited at Abergwilli Museum.

### 1.3 PHASING

Construction and occupation activities, as recorded through the excavated contexts, were revealed in a series of Harris matrices (Barker 1979). These were created for every area (room or building) on the site. Related activities and contexts were then grouped into phases and these 'area' phases were related to a series of seven major phases (1 to 7) and 26 sub-phases (1a, 1b, 2a–d, 3a–d, 4a–d, 4b–d, 5a–d, 6a–d, 7a–d) of construction and occupation activity stretching across the site. In Phases 1 to 5, sub-phases a and c are mainly construction activity whilst sub-phases b and d

are mainly occupation activity. The dating was provided by the coins but also obtained from typological analysis of the metal objects, ceramics, glass and architectural features. Only in the final phase of writing up has the historical information been used to interpret the archaeological evidence, consequently the major siege of the castle in 1287 lies in the midst of Phase 4. This results in the Welsh lordly occupation and construction period lasting from Phase 1a to Phase 4b and the English garrison occupation lasted from Phase 4b to 6a, with the destruction of the castle occurring in Phases 6b to 6d. The full sequence is outlined in Figure 1.5 and described in detail in Sections 2.2 and 3.2.

- **Phase 1** was the initial construction of the castle, a large round tower (Round Tower D) and curtain wall forming a polygonal enclosure (Inner Ward) at the highest point on the hill.
- **Phase 2** involved the construction of a hall (Great Hall K/L) in the enclosure followed by a sequence of wooden buildings against its eastern side. A hearth to the south of the hall became a masonry kitchen building (Kitchen I) and in the angle between the curtain wall and the hall a single cell prison was constructed (Prison M).
- **Phase 3** saw the expansion of the castle with the construction of a large masonry building beside the hall (Great Chamber G) replacing the earlier wooden structures. A second ward (Middle Ward) was added to the castle, increasing its defensive capability and the volume of accommodation. A hall (Guest Hall X) and a couple of phases of buildings (Building Ya later replaced by Building Yb) were constructed against the walls of the new ward. There was extensive occupation of all these buildings.
- **Phase 4a–b** saw the redevelopment of the castle. A third ward (Outer Ward), incorporating a small gatehouse (Castle Gatehouse W), was added. The Inner Ward had a new series of apartments (Apartments I/J) constructed alongside the south side of the Great Hall K/L, which was itself altered, receiving an extra storey and lowering the level of the first floor. A chapel (Chapel H) was constructed at the south end of the Great Chamber G, which itself had an additional floor inserted. The Gateway Area B into the Inner Ward was remodelled and a new outer gateway added.
- **Phase 4b–c** incorporates the siege of 1287. The damaged castle was subsequently repaired followed by a period of occupation.
- **Phase 5** was a long period with occupation and a series of repairs. A new wooden floor was inserted into the Great Chamber G and a small new timber framed guardhouse added into the Gateway Area B.

DRYSLWYN CASTLE

PHASE	DATE	Castle: Inner Ward	Castle: Middle & Outer Wards & Town
1a	1220–30	Round Tower D & initial castle curtain wall	
1b		Occupation	
2a	1230–50	Great Hall K/L & dividing wall (E4)	
2b		Occupation	
2c		Kitchen I, Prison M & clay-floored buildings in Areas F & G	
2d		Occupation	
3a	1250–80	Great Chamber G & Middle Ward	Middle Ward & Welsh town
3b		Occupation & latrine (F23)	Occupation
3c			Guest Hall X
3d		Occupation & kitchen midden (F19)	Building Ya, occupation
4a	1280–87	Great Hall K/L altered, Apartments I/J, Gateway B altered	Outer Ward, Castle Gatehouse W & Building Yb. Possible town expansion & town walls & Town Gatehouse U
4b		Occupation, kitchen midden (F16)	
4c	1287–1300	Siege repairs (F2), passage into round tower (D10)	Town expansion & town walls & Town Gatehouse U in or before this period
4d		Occupation	
5a	1338–1405	Repairs to Great Hall K/L, crosswalls in I/J	
5b		Occupation	
5c		Wood frame gatehouse (B21, B22), posts in Great Chamber G	
5d		Occupation	
6a	1405–30	Decommissioning	
6b		Looting	
6c		Burning	
6d		Demolition & rubble deposition	
7a	1430–1700	Late & post-medieval activity	
7b	1430–1980	Late & post-medieval soil build up	
7c	1700–1980	Post-abandonment activity, eg animal burial	18th & 19th century visiting of the site
7d	1980–95	Excavation	

FIGURE 1.5

*Dryslwyn Castle and town: phasing and dating summary*

- **Phase 6** saw the decommissioning of the castle, with entrances being blocked, followed by looting and the pulling out of freestone from the walls, after a substantial fire which engulfed the whole of the Inner Ward. The castle was deliberately demolished.
- **Phase 7** includes the possible re-use/rebuilding of at least one building in the Outer Ward. Occupation continued in the town. After abandonment of the site there is evidence from the 18th century to the present day of picnicking and casual visitation to the hilltop ruins.

**1.4 CASTLE STUDIES IN WALES**

The state of scholarship of English castles has recently been outlined by Wheatley (2004, 4–14). She suggests that the excavation and interpretation of Dryslwyn

Castle occurs at a time when almost all masonry castles with upstanding remains in England and Wales have been identified (King 1983) and the sequence of development for the castle in England has been established (Clark 1884; Armitage 1912; Brown 1954; King 1988; Thompson 1987; 1991b; Kenyon 1990). Initial work on castles which focused on the functional, defensive qualities of remaining masonry (Stocker 1992), is now being reinterpreted as castles are increasingly seen as signifiers in a wider social and cultural context. This approach appreciates castles as devices which define lordship (Coulson 2003), are mechanisms for the display of power, wealth and status, form part of much larger physical and cultural landscapes (Johnson 2002; Liddiard 2005), constitute part of the medieval intellectual landscape (Wheatley 2004) and act as both drivers and products of economic and political development (Pounds 1990). This approach has been principally focused on ‘English’

castles, whether in England, Wales, Ireland or Scotland, for which there are extensive historical records and which can be readily appreciated as part of the fabric of a clearly comprehended late medieval society.

The situation for castles built by Welsh princes and lords is far less well understood (Avent 1983; Butler 2003), since there is limited historic and archaeological information. A situation which has also been noted for the castles of the native lords in Ireland (McNeill 1997). Texts from pre-14th-century Wales, such as the chronicle *Brut-y-Tywysogyon*, the Welsh law codes (Charles-Edwards *et al* 2000), literature such as the *Mabinogion* (Jones and Jones 1949), descriptions such as the *Journey through Wales* and the *Description of Wales* by Giraldus Cambrensis (Thorpe 1978) and the legal documents and letters of Welsh princes and lords (Edwards 1935; Pryce 2005), provide little meaningful information about Welsh castles. There are no building accounts for Welsh castles such as those for the Edwardian castles of North Wales (Brown *et al* 1963) and no household accounts. The Welsh texts do describe the activities in the *llys*, the traditional court of the Welsh lord and the physical structure in which it was located (Charles-Edwards *et al* 2000). Masonry castles are, however, barely mentioned in these documents since the texts derive in large part from an earlier period of Welsh history and they have a focus on traditional social structures in which the masonry castles of the 1180s–1280s do not yet have a distinctive role. In comparison to England and France, there is also a dearth of information on the nature of 12th- and 13th-century Welsh society as few contemporary documents were ever created and even fewer survive. There has been only limited advance, principally through the works of Griffiths (1994), Smith (1998), Davies (2004), and Pryce (2005), from the picture drawn of 11th to 14th century Wales by Prof R R Davies in his 1987 work *Conquest, coexistence and change: Wales 1063–1415* (reissued in paperback in 1991 as *The age of conquest: Wales 1063–1415*). Evidence from the art and literature of Wales indicates regional activity and distinctive styles that fit into wider European literary and artistic traditions (Huws 2000; Lord 2003).

Castles were undoubtedly key symbols of status and lordship for Welsh princes and lords by the early 13th century. In 1216, the *Brut-y-Tywysogyon* describes the Treaty of Aberdyfi, in which the lands of the Lord Rhys were divided up amongst his most prominent sons. Each smaller ‘lordship’ was described in terms of the cantrefs and commotes that formed the lordship plus a named castle. The equating of lands, lordship and a castle is unmistakable and also occurs in England and France (Coulson 2003, 205). However, as Giraldus Cambrensis observes, ‘The Welsh value distinguished birth and noble descent more than anything else in the world. They would rather marry into a noble family than a rich one. Even the common

people know their family tree by heart and can recite from memory the list of their grandfathers, great grandfathers, great great grandfathers back to the sixth or seventh generation.’ (Thorpe 1978, 251). Thus lordship in Wales was engendered through lineage; castles were a representation and product of that lordship in the late 12th and 13th century. The limited Welsh historical sources include Iolo Goch’s late 14th-century poem on Owain Glyn Dŵr’s castle at Sycharth (Denbighshire) (Hague and Warhurst 1966). This initially describes the palatial nature of an aisled wooden hall behind a wide gateway surrounded by a moat but principally focuses on praising the fishponds, rabbit warren, orchard and other resources and natural advantages of the site. The only building comparison made is between a stone tower and the towers of Westminster Abbey. A similar description, focusing on the abundant natural and man made resources available at a site, is given by Giraldus Cambrensis in his late 12th-century description of the castle at Manorbier (Pembrokeshire) (Thorpe 1978, 150). Though both authors could eulogise over architecture making numerous classical or biblical references such as those seen elsewhere in English and French literature to describe castles, such as the description by Lambert of Ardres of the domus (castle) of Count Baldwin II of Guines (Coulson 2003, 73), they do not do so. This might suggest that such classical analogies were not part of the thinking of Welsh lords and their acolytes when contemplating castles. There was, however, cultural virtue in placing your castle in a location with abundant natural resources, which you then further enhanced. Awareness of other more powerful architecture, especially the Marcher castles of south Wales, is evident as Giraldus Cambrensis hesitates to describe Manorbier (Pembrokeshire) as a castle in comparison to such fortresses. The fact that wealth was displayed by even modest wooden buildings in the Wales of 1390, says much about the changes in political and economic fortune which took place in Welsh society between 1280 and 1380. Tellingly, the hall at Sycharth (Denbighshire) is described in the manner of an early medieval hall, indicative of the increasingly traditional, backward looking, cultural reference points of Welsh society by this later date. The extent of the much greater cultural confidence in the Wales of the 13th century, however, remains unclear. Since Welsh castles do not simply copy earlier Marcher forms, but develop some elements which are architecturally distinctive, it would suggest that between 1180 and 1280 some form of ‘Welsh’ architecture had developed, perhaps based on Welsh social structures and an appreciation of the resources of the site (Section 2.3).

Like the historical information, the physical evidence also has limitations. Welsh masonry castles are, with the exception of Ewloe (Flintshire), situated on hilltop sites, seemingly defensive locations with high visibility. Many of their physical features could

be considered to have limited military effectiveness: towers which do not provide flanking fire across the walls, arrowloops which do not provide an effective field of fire, weak gateways and walls which are thin and have limited resistance to siege engines, thus they could be interpreted as merely having a 'marshal appearance'. However, it could equally convincingly be argued that these were functional defensive structures, designed to be effective against siege by the forces of neighbouring lords. They *were* clearly both attacked and defended since Carmarthenshire is one of the counties with the highest recorded instances of siege (Liddiard 2005, 71). Defences, it should be remembered, are often constructed through fear of violence, rather than an accurate and detailed appreciation of the threat.

The masonry castles built by Welsh princes and lords now lie in isolated rural locations (Avent 1983; Davis 1988); a consequence of the movement of power and people, during and after the conquest of Wales (1093–1283), to present day population centres around the ports of the north and south Wales coast. Though this potentially left most Welsh castles, such as Castell-y-Bere (Gwynedd) and Dinas Bran (Denbighshire), as substantial 13th-century remains devoid of later buildings and alterations, their remote location, ruined appearance and lack of later use led many to appear as romantic ruins, visited from the 18th century onwards and described and drawn in 18th- and 19th-century books on tours of Wales (Pennant 1773; Gastineau 1830; Black 1864). The role of these castles as visitable monuments has often determined their subsequent history. Some, such as Dolwyddelan (Conwy), were uncovered and restored in the 19th century (Avent 1994b) or amended for the ease and comfort of visitors as exemplified by the installation of the tea house at the top of the round tower at Dinefwr (Carmarthenshire) (Rees and Caple 1999, 20–21). Many were cleared in the early to mid 20th century and consolidated to improve them as legible monuments. The clearance of monuments such as Castell-y-Bere (Gwynedd) and Carreg Cennan (Carmarthenshire) continued up to the late 20th century, leaving little or no archaeological record (Butler 2003, 149; 1974, 80–81). Though a limited number, including Caergwrlle (Flintshire), Dolforwyn (Powys) and Dryslwyn, survived intact to become the subject of modern excavation projects (Manley 1994; Butler 1990; 1994; 1997; Webster 1987; Caple 1990b), others such as Carndochan (Gwynedd), Dinas Bran (Denbighshire) and Dinefwr (Carmarthenshire), have yet to be investigated.

Those castles which were subject to earlier excavation such as Criccieth (Gwynedd) (O'Neil 1944–45) and Deganwy (Conwy) (Alcock 1967) provided valuable but limited published information. Excavation invariably revealed complex sequences of construction with only limited stratified archaeological deposits.

It often proved difficult to relate the archaeological deposits to the associated walling sequences. Dating evidence in the form of coins, ceramic sequences and architectural fragments was scarce. Due to funding constraints excavations such as those at Dinas Emrys (Gwynedd) (Savory 1960) and Dyserth (Denbighshire) (Glenn 1915) were often of limited scale. Dating was frequently by stylistic comparison to English examples, as in the case of the gatehouse at Criccieth (Gwynedd) which was dated by comparison to those at Beeston (Cheshire) and Montgomery (Powys) castles (Avent 1983, 17; 1989, 10). Combinations of these factors have made it difficult to achieve a refined chronology for the construction of Welsh castles, especially since the construction of masonry castles occurs over such a short period between the 1180s and 1280s. Indeed much of the focus of Welsh castle studies has been to distinguish accurately between the work of the Welsh princes and subsequent Edwardian construction.

Excavation work has also been undertaken at a number of Marcher castles: Laugharne (Carmarthenshire) (Avent 1981), Loughor (Swansea) (Lewis 1994), Montgomery (Powys) (Knight 1993; 1994; 1996) and Rumney (Cardiff) (Lightfoot 1992) and there is ongoing reassessment, by Cadw, of the surviving masonry at many Marcher castles: Chepstow (Monmouthshire) (Turner 2002a; Turner and Johnson 2006), Cilgerran (Pembrokeshire) (Hilling 2000) and Kidwelly (Carmarthenshire) (Kenyon 2002). This is seeking to provide improved accuracy and dating for castle building in south Wales and the Marches.

During the excavation and subsequent post-excavation work on Dryslwyn Castle the legacy of 19th- and early 20th-century excavation of Welsh castles and its lack of detailed archaeological record has loomed large. Consequently this author has endeavoured to record the excavation in as much detail as was practical, to recover and analyse as much evidence as possible, from measuring the nails and weighing all rounded stones to analysing the pottery for organic residues and identifying tens of thousands of pieces of bone. That evidence is placed in context in this report, though the quality and quantity of the environmental evidence has resulted in a more substantial appreciation of the evidence of food production and consumption in 13th–15th-century Wales (Section 10.1). No apology is made for what may still seem to some an excess of detail. The vast majority of the books on Welsh castles frequently do little more than produce an uncritical echo of the old ideas about one tower form developing after another, or ascribe building activities to one or other of the named historical figures recorded in the *Brut-y-Tywysogyon*. What Welsh castles need is hard information and not more recycled ideas. Even serious scholars such as Roger Turvey (1997) have created complete landscapes of history filled with castles, strategies, campaigns and battles, whilst the supposed,

castle remains have not even been accurately surveyed, let alone excavated or dated.

### 1.5 DEVELOPMENT OF WELSH CASTLES

Masonry castles were an expression of political, military, social and economic power, in built form. They were often constructed initially as one means of exercising control over a localised area and employed later as part of a wider national social and legal control system. As such, castles frequently mark the end of tribal, clan-centred society and the emergence and development of a hierarchical, centralised 'modern' state (Pounds 1990, 295). Whilst elements in a castle's design and construction may represent the taste and ideas of an individual lord or mason, they were usually built in a form that corresponds to the military and architectural thinking of the period. They were designed to defend and accommodate those who owned the castle and impress those viewing or visiting it. Individuals or societies that created such buildings must have possessed the economic resources and the constructional skills necessary to erect them, as well as the appropriate social and economic structures to maintain them and their associated military and domestic organisations. The presence and operation of masonry castles in 13th-century Wales indicates that these resources, skills and social and economic structures were all present within that society.

Following the Norman incursions into Wales during the 11th century, the Welsh learnt to adapt and use earth and wood motte and bailey or ringwork castles, for example at Cymer (Gwynedd) (Avent 1983, 4; 1992, 11; King 1988, 130). The role and influence of existing 'native' building forms, whether the rath, crannog, hillfort or *llys*, has rarely been discussed, due to a lack of evidence. McNeill (1997, 234) notes that, even after the appearance of English-built masonry castles in Ireland, with only a few exceptions the Irish kings and chieftains did not start to use castles, since substantial permanent defensive structures had no role in their society. Kings or chieftains were chosen as the member of a noble family who commanded widespread respect and support from the clan. Personal ownership of a substantial building had no part to play in this process. It is interesting to note, however, that castle-building did emerge in Welsh society.

Masonry castle construction was not utilised by Welsh princes in the 11th and early 12th centuries, despite the presence of early Norman masonry castles, such as Cardiff and Chepstow (Monmouthshire). Welsh masonry castles appear to have been constructed only from the late 12th century. Giraldus Cambrensis identifies only two Welsh masonry castles in his tour through Wales in 1188 (Avent 1983, 7), although there were almost certainly more than this. With evidence of more than 25 Welsh masonry castles

by the 1280s (Avent 1994b, 11; Davis 1988; King 1983) (Figure 2.1), it can be suggested that by the end of the 13th-century Welsh society, or at least sections of it, had evolved from a clan or family basis to a more aristocratic, hierarchical system that retained personal wealth; in other words, one which had both the need and the social and economic means to construct and maintain functioning castles. The presence of well-developed 'kingdoms' (Deheubarth, Gwynedd and Powys), the proximity of feudal Marcher lordships and constant military threat, in addition to increasing economic prosperity and social development, all aided this development.

#### Welsh masonry castles

Welsh castles constructed by the princes and lords of Gwynedd, Deheubarth and Powys all conform to wider traditions of castle architecture in 12th- to 14th-century England. From the late 12th century, square keeps inside curtain walls began to be superseded by round keeps, for example at Conisborough Castle (South Yorkshire). Flanking towers projecting from the curtain wall also changed from the square forms, seen at Dover (Kent) and Framlingham (Suffolk), to semi-circular forms, for example at Skenfrith (Monmouthshire) (Forde-Johnston 1979, 28; Kenyon 1990, 72). The traditional keep and curtain wall castle was also superseded by castles without keeps, like Bolingbroke (Lincolnshire), where a series of towers set within a curtain wall formed a strongly defended ward. This form had evolved by the late 13th century into the classic concentric castles found at Caerphilly (Caerphilly) and Harlech (Gwynedd), in addition to the more irregularly shaped strongholds seen at Caernarfon (Gwynedd) and Conwy (Conwy) (Forde-Johnston 1979, 97).

Welsh castles, such as Castell-y-Bere (Gwynedd), Dolforwyn (Powys) and Dryslwyn, were not ersatz copies of Marcher castles. They developed distinctive architectural forms that must be seen as a response to the military and social needs of their own society. With the exception of Carndochan (Gwynedd) and Ewloe (Flintshire), they do not have the form of a central keep and surrounding curtain wall, but form an irregular, polygonal walled enclosure with a substantial tower or towers. These towers act primarily as a series of small donjons, rather than as flanking towers, since they were not positioned to provide effective covering fire for the curtain wall. Significantly, they provided domestic occupation in a defensible form and, as such, they correspond with Thompson's classification of the 'solar keep' (Thompson 1991b, 39). They also provided a 'visible permanent architectural statement of lordship in an age when the feudal lord might, in practice, be absent for most of the time' (Marshall 2002, 34)

Military service by feudal vassals in England during the 12th and 13th centuries was increasingly replaced with financial contributions (scutage), leading to the rise of professional soldiery. The corresponding evolution of military architecture, influenced by European siege warfare and the Crusades, led to large and increasingly specialised forms, culminating by the late 13th century in the concentric castle. In Wales, however, armed conflict was largely between lords and princes engaged in family feuds or fighting over landholdings. The societies of Wales, Scotland and Ireland, which retained tribal/clan and family loyalties (McNeill 1997, 234; Pierce 1972), controlled much smaller amounts of land and had smaller populations with lower levels of currency, so that castles continued to act as personal strongholds long into the 13th century.

Welsh castles probably evolved from both the traditional Welsh *llys* and Norman motte and bailey castles of the 11th and 12th centuries. The defensive circuits of the bailey and *llys* are present in the form of timber stockades or curtain walls and surrounding ditches. These protected the hall, which, as is shown by Edward's removal of the timber hall from the *llys* at Ystumgwern to Harlech Castle (Smith 1998, 235), remained the focus for social and political activity in Welsh medieval society. Activities, such as cooking, stabling and sleeping, were ranged around the hall of the *llys*, many in separate buildings (Johnstone 1999; Longley 1996). The rising level of wealth in Wales, as well as in England, in the 13th century led to an increased desire for privacy and new emphasis was placed on the construction of private chambers and apartments. The increasing utilisation of masonry in Welsh castles of the late 12th and 13th century enabled the private chambers and defensive requirement to be incorporated to form towers such as the round tower at Dolbadarn. This dual defence and accommodation role was common for mural towers in 13th century English and Marcher castles as in the case of the Martens Tower at Chepstow Castle (Turner and Johnston 2006, 151–167). In some cases private chambers and defence may have also been merged with a hall function as seen in the masonry tower-hall seen at Dolwyddelan (Conwy).

The format of the tower on the perimeter wall may derive from the earlier Norman motte-and-bailey castle forms where the first building constructed in masonry were the keeps/towers erected on the motte, such as the shell keep at Cardiff. In the case of Nevern we can see an early Welsh masonry castle incorporating a masonry tower on a Norman motte as part of its defensive perimeter (Capple forthcoming). The architecture of Welsh castles, such as Dinas Bran (Denbighshire) and Dolforwyn (Powys), clearly emphasises the importance of the tower, which would have been a culturally important symbol as well as a functional residential and defensive structure. In

comparison to towers (round, square or apsidal and almost always part of the defensive circuit), gateways and low thin curtain walls have minimal visual emphasis. Most Welsh castles comprise several towers connected by a curtain wall, for example, Castell-y-Bere (Gwynedd), Dinas Bran (Denbighshire) and Dolforwyn (Powys). These towers acted as discrete foci; each may have accommodated different individuals and their families who co-operated in a joint castle defence. The hypothesis that the towers of a Welsh castle (*Criccieth*) were occupied by different branches of a single family clan was initially proposed by Dr Douglas Simpson (Hemp 1942, 112) who observed separate houses occupied by different branches of the same family clustered around a single farmyard, the unit system, in the late 17th century farmstead of Park Llanfrothen in Gwynedd. However, since there was no historical basis for this arrangement, Hemp was reported to have abandoned the idea (O'Neil 1944–45, 20).

Faulkner (1958) noted the occurrence of multiple suites of accommodation within a defensive wall as an emerging theme in castle architecture of England in the 14th century. As in the case of Goodrich Castle, the accommodation was often based in a mural tower with associated hall (Faulkner 1958, 224) with access to central facilities such as chapel, kitchen and stables. Dixon also noted the presence of separate households in the castles of north-western France. The idea of 'separate households' within a defensive perimeter has been present since the Iron Age hillfort, and is perhaps an obvious and rational explanation for any defended settlement with multiple suites of accommodation such as the Romano-British defended village of Din Lligwy (Anglesey).

The key question is the nature of the 'separate household' and its relationship to the owner of the castle. In a feudal society the separate households may be others of social rank such as the king, bishop or another lord and their attendant retinue, although in a family- or clan-based society this household would have been kinsmen of the lord. Social rank and kinship were often combined in an aristocracy or elite. In the case of Welsh castles, there is little evidence of fellow Welsh lords of the 12th and 13th centuries visiting and entertaining each other, consequently the presence of separate towers as suites of accommodation may be argued as demonstrating the continuing elements of the clan or family structure. In the case of castles with only one tower, such as Dryslwyn, it may suggest that only a single dominant individual or group was present within the castle when it was constructed.

Although the prime importance of towers in Welsh castles is generally accepted (Avent 1994b, 13), other interpretations for the multiple tower forms, such as hosting or performing different functions or being constructed at different times (Avent 1983), or as an indicator of wealth or prestige (Butler 2003), are also

possible. No evidence of differing function has yet been produced and it has been argued that Castell-y-Bere (Gwynedd) (Butler 1974) and Dolforwyn Castle (Powys) (Butler 1997), for example, were largely built in one phase (Avent 1994b, 14).

It is interesting to note that the towers characterising the initial phases of Welsh masonry castle construction generally contained a basement, a small hall or public room at first-floor level, private rooms on the upper floors and a first-floor entrance. This arrangement is very similar to the tower-houses that were developed by the native aristocracy in 15th- to 17th-century Scotland and Ireland (Thompson 1987, 22), in addition to the keeps of 12th-century English castles. Thus, it appears to be an almost generic form of masonry castle construction developed by every society as it experimented with defensive masonry structures. It is reasonable to suggest that, as different parts of Britain developed social and economic structures at different rates, so they spawned these early masonry tower-house castles in different centuries.

### Construction

The Welsh lords and princes of the 12th century perceived clear threats from each other, the English Crown and their Marcher neighbours. As a result, there were periods of relative peace interspersed with periods of armed conflict, which might have induced castle-building. The written record of the *Brut-y-Tywysogyon* (Section 2.1) indicates that there was a high level of armed conflict in 12th-century Wales in which castles were often captured. This would suggest not only that the castles were made of wood, but also that their number increased (Kenyon 1996). It was only during the late 12th and 13th centuries that they started to be built in stone, giving advantages of greatly improved defences and a significant display of power and wealth, but at high cost.

The conditions for the construction of a masonry castle are, even in the 13th and 14th centuries, a rare combination of circumstances that fulfil King's paradox of castle building: 'war supplied the need for castles, but they could only be built in conditions of peace' (King 1983, xxxix). Since walls may take several years to build, stability and control of an area must be maintained over a number of years. However, the resources and manpower available also determine the time taken to construct a castle: the keep at Scarborough (North Yorkshire) required ten seasons of work, Newcastle (Tyne and Wear) eight and Dover (Kent) nine (Rowland 1996, 155). Simple tower keeps, like Dryslwyn, could have been constructed in two or three seasons, though since the curtain wall could have been constructed simultaneously, the first castle (Phase 1) at Dryslwyn might have only taken two to

three years to build. With the main defences established, internal buildings, such as the hall block and great chamber, could safely be added at a later date, giving the castle the appearance of a building site for much of its early life.

The major limitation in the creation of masonry castles was funding. A number of factors needed to be in place in order to raise sufficient funds. Firstly, the traditional dues and renders of the *gwestfa* had to be consolidated into a single financial payment (Rees 1924; Turvey 2002, 107), thereby raising taxation that provided the necessary funding for construction projects. It would have been impossible to fund a major programme of building through a stream of food renders in the form of a variety of small animals presented at irregular intervals throughout the year. Secondly, dependent towns or villages were required to provide revenue for the lord. It is no coincidence that the origins of many Welsh townships (*trefti*) can be traced to the late 12th and early to mid 13th centuries, when castles were also being constructed (Soulsby 1983, 130). Thirdly, an expansion in the use of coinage was needed, not only to enable the payment of the *gwestfa* in coin, but also to acquire easily the wide range of materials and specialist services required for castle-building. This process was started by the princes of Gwynedd and lords of Deheubarth in the early to mid 13th century (Davies 1987, 139–171), but Edward I greatly accelerated it in north Wales by paying the workers on his castles in silver coin. The money was then spent in markets and fairs in nearby towns and villages, which in turn fostered the growth of these settlements into centres of taxable wealth.

Pounds' (1990, 18) 'Wild West' model of castles as bases for hostile invaders who projected their will over the local population through the use of cavalry is clearly inappropriate for the castles of Welsh lords, who already controlled the local population. His suggestion that castles were located with regard to centres of population, securing services to support the castle and future tax revenue, and not with regard to rivers and roads, since these routeways need not be used by armed raiders, is certainly interesting (Pounds 1990, 56–57). Nevertheless, given the limited urban development in Wales, it is doubtful that Welsh castles had many large centres of population to control. All Welsh castles, with the exception of Ewloe (Flintshire), are situated on naturally defensive sites, thus, the combination of military advantage and visual prominence was almost certainly key to their location. Several examples, Dryslwyn and Dolforwyn (Powys) included, also lie within or close to major river valleys, which may have contained important routeways. Unfortunately, our lack of knowledge concerning the roads and tracks of 13th-century Wales is such that no definitive statement can be made concerning their overall relationship to communications routes. The valleys below the castles may have had greater

importance for supporting agriculture than acting as routeways.

Castles in England were initially built by the Norman kings, lords and their knightly tenants in locations where they needed to control an existing town and its associated existing social, political and economic systems or an area of land (Liddiard 2005, 18). In the 11th and 12th century, Wales was still largely ruled according to tradition and codified law, overseen by minor princely families. Although often at war with each other, there was only a limited tradition of physical defences, conflict being based on open armed combat. There were few, if any, existing settlements of any great size or economic importance to dominate. Beneath the princes, who after the mid 12th century were normally termed *arglwydd* or lord (Pierce 1972, 28), there was no established class of aristocracy with sufficient wealth to develop castles. King (1983, xxxvi) confidently asserts that both princes and freemen (*uchelwyr*) who had risen to hold the title of lord (*arglwydd*) could build castles, these being primarily of earth and timber. Avent (1983, 28–36), however, suggests the princes of Gwynedd were responsible for constructing almost all the castles in north Wales. The paucity of historical documentation precludes any confident statement on this point.

The suggestion has been put forward by Avent (1983, 13) that, by the early 13th century, the princes of Gwynedd were building castles in order to mark and defend the edge of their territory. Turvey (1997, 105), meanwhile, proposes that the Lord Rhys constructed a series of castles to expand and consolidate the boundaries of late 12th-century Deheubarth. Davies (2004, 198–207) echoes this theory, suggesting that Welsh castles were designed only to withstand short sieges, since they were only erected as part of a system of frontier control by major lords and princes, who would quickly dispatch a relieving force to any besieged castle. Whilst it is widely accepted that castles could be instruments of regional control, crucially it is their dating that indicates which lord had them constructed and whether at the time the region concerned had been recently annexed. The limited number of well excavated and dated Welsh castles makes any such interpretation premature. The limitations of the argument are demonstrated by Pounds (1990, 164), who suggests that Dryslwyn Castle and the castle of Newcastle Emlyn (Carmarthenshire) were outlying fortresses of the lands of Rhys ap Gruffudd, the Lord Rhys. Since these castles were not built for another 50 years, however, they are in fact quite unconnected with the Lord Rhys's control of the territory of Deheubarth.

The lack of control by the Crown over castles built in Marcher lands (Pounds 1990, 38) may have influenced Welsh lords and princes and there is no evidence of any formal controls being exercised over the construction of Welsh castles. The walls of such castles were invariably located on the break of slope that

defined the top of a hill; thus, the size and shape of the hill and any associated prehistoric earthwork governed the size and shape of the castle (Kenyon 1990, 47; King 1988, 134). Both Dinas Bran (Denbighshire) and the Phase 1 castle at Dryslwyn demonstrate this point clearly. Working with the slope of the ground and using the natural defensive qualities of the site were thus inherent characteristics of Welsh castles. This was, by the mid 13th century, in marked contrast to English and Marcher castle construction, which, in response to castle sieges of the early 13th century, favoured the imposition of predetermined castle plans onto the landscape, for example at Beaumaris (Anglesey) and Caerphilly (Caerphilly).

By the 13th century, Wales was increasingly using the commote, a sub-division of the cantref, for administrative purposes. In a number of the commotes of north Wales, castles co-existed with *llys* (Longley 1996, 205), suggesting that, for a time, they fulfilled different roles. Castles represent strong defensive sites with an architecture designed to resist attack, whilst the traditional *llys* sites of Gwynedd, for example Rhosyr and Aberffraw, were lightly defended centres for the lord's court and commotal centre, with activities usually based in the hall (*neuadd*). In many commotes, however, especially those in the frontier region, it is probable that the role of commotal centre and stronghold were combined in a single site, such as at Dinefwr (Carmarthenshire), Deganwy (Conwy) and Dryslwyn. Goronwy Evans has suggested that a Norman (earth and timber) castle was present in every Welsh commote (Avent 1994b, 12). In the 13th-century borderlands of Wales, this was invariably the case (Barker and Higham 1988, 64; King 1983, xxxvii). Given their superior defensive qualities, it is probable that castles had effectively displaced *llys* by this date in these regions. McNeill (1997, 52) argues that most of the early masonry castles of Ireland were built for administration and display and had limited expectation of serious attack. Many of the lesser elite built out-of-date motte-and-bailey castles on the same basis. The careful itemisation of the castles with their land divisions in the 1216 Treaty of Aberdyfi, as recorded in the *Brut-y-Tywysogyon*, indicates that, for the Welsh too, castles were as important as symbols of power as they were in physical reality.

Much of the success that the Welsh had previously enjoyed against the armies of English kings, such as John and Henry III, had been based on fighting using guerrilla 'hit-and-run' tactics. Lost in the vastness of the Welsh forests, English kings had found that fighting the Welsh was almost unwinnable (Davies 2004, 89–111). However, the establishment of castles by the Welsh in the 13th century, together with their associated settlements, now created fixed points in the landscape, places where the wealth and power of Wales could be concentrated. As a result, it was perhaps the establishment of these castles and settlements that

made Wales both vulnerable to and worthy of capture by the late 13th century. Furthermore, the emergence of professional soldiers, paid for through the financial levy (scutage), enabled Edward I to keep a professional army in the field against the Welsh 365 days a year (Morris 1901, 68). This allowed him to campaign through the year and not solely in the summer, when he was able to call upon his feudal levies. This, together with the development of towns and castles made it possible to wage a successful war against the Welsh for the first time.

The development of Welsh masonry castles, untrumpeted by written history, reflects a substantial change in the social and economic fabric of Wales: the ability to centralise and husband resources. Castles did not merely reflect this change passively, but played an active role, an agency fostering urbanism and the development of a cash economy. This made Wales worth invading and possible to hold. Urban development and masonry building ran ahead of and were part of the reason for the English invasion, rather than its consequence.



**Taylor & Francis**

Taylor & Francis Group

<http://taylorandfrancis.com>

## WELSH LORDSHIP PERIOD (1197–1287): HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SUMMARY

### 2.1 HISTORY OF THE LORDSHIP AND CASTLE OF DRYSLWYN 1197–1287

by Chris Caple and Chris Phillpotts

This chapter presents a history of the military and political activities of the lords of Dryslwyn, including their forebears and relatives. It also incorporates the principal references to the foundation and development of Dryslwyn Castle. The information has been collated primarily from two near-contemporary sources: the *Brut -y-Tywysogyon* in its various versions (*BT*) and the *Annales Cambriae* (*AC*). The *Annales Cambriae* contains sections derived from an original native Latin chronicle, which is itself thought to have been compiled towards the end of the 13th century at the Cistercian abbey of Strata Florida (Cardiganshire/Ceredigion) as a continuation of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britannie*, which has since been lost. The *Brut -y-Tywysogyon* is a 14th-century Welsh translation of the same lost chronicle.

Additional primary and secondary works provide further context and explanation for the events recorded in the chronicles, whilst the castles, towns, religious houses, cantrefi and commotes referred to below are located on Figures 2.1–2.3. The term Ystrad Tywi is used in the historical sources to refer to the middle and upper reaches of the valley of the River Tywi, above Carmarthen.

#### The legacy of the Lord Rhys

In the year 1197, Rhys ap Gruffudd, lord of the lands of Deheubarth, known as the Lord Rhys (*AC* 60–61; *BT* 76–78), died. He had been remarkably successful in restoring the fortunes of his principality and maintaining its integrity in the face of intermittent pressure from the Anglo-Norman Marcher lords. From his principal and ancient power centre of Dinefwr, he

ruled over Ceredigion, Cantref Mawr and Cantref Bychan, together with some peripheral commotes. He achieved his success through astute and flexible diplomacy, and by establishing a working relationship with King Henry II of England in 1171–72. During Rhys' final years, his numerous sons also began to compete for power and for their shares of the inheritance, which would come to them by the Welsh principle of male partibility (Davies 1987, 120). In this system of division, descendants in the male line divided the ancestral lands into fractions, which were determined by their representation of the shares of the founding father's sons (*per stirpes*). The struggles between the Lord Rhys' sons and their descendants framed the political history of south-west Wales in the 90 years after his death. In the Tywi valley, the main competition was between two branches of the progeny of his son Rhys Gryg (Figure 2.4). One branch was descended from Rhys Mechyll and based at Dinefwr; the other comprised in succession Maredudd ap Rhys Gryg and his son Rhys ap Maredudd, who were lords of Dryslwyn. Their contest was profoundly influenced by pressure from the princes of Gwynedd and the kings of England. As lords of Deheubarth, both families would have sought to maintain a court (Charles-Edwards *et al* 2000) and band of warriors (*teulu*). Both families were conscious of their ancestry and aimed to emulate the Lord Rhys in the traditions of the court, power and landholding.

#### Rhys Gryg

After the death of the Lord Rhys, the feuds between his sons became murderous (Davies 1987, 224). Between 1202 and 1209, two of them, Rhys Gryg and Maelgwyn, and their nephews Rhys Ieuanc and Owain ap Gruffudd, were locked in armed struggle for the possession of all the lands and castles of Deheubarth.

DRYSLWYN CASTLE

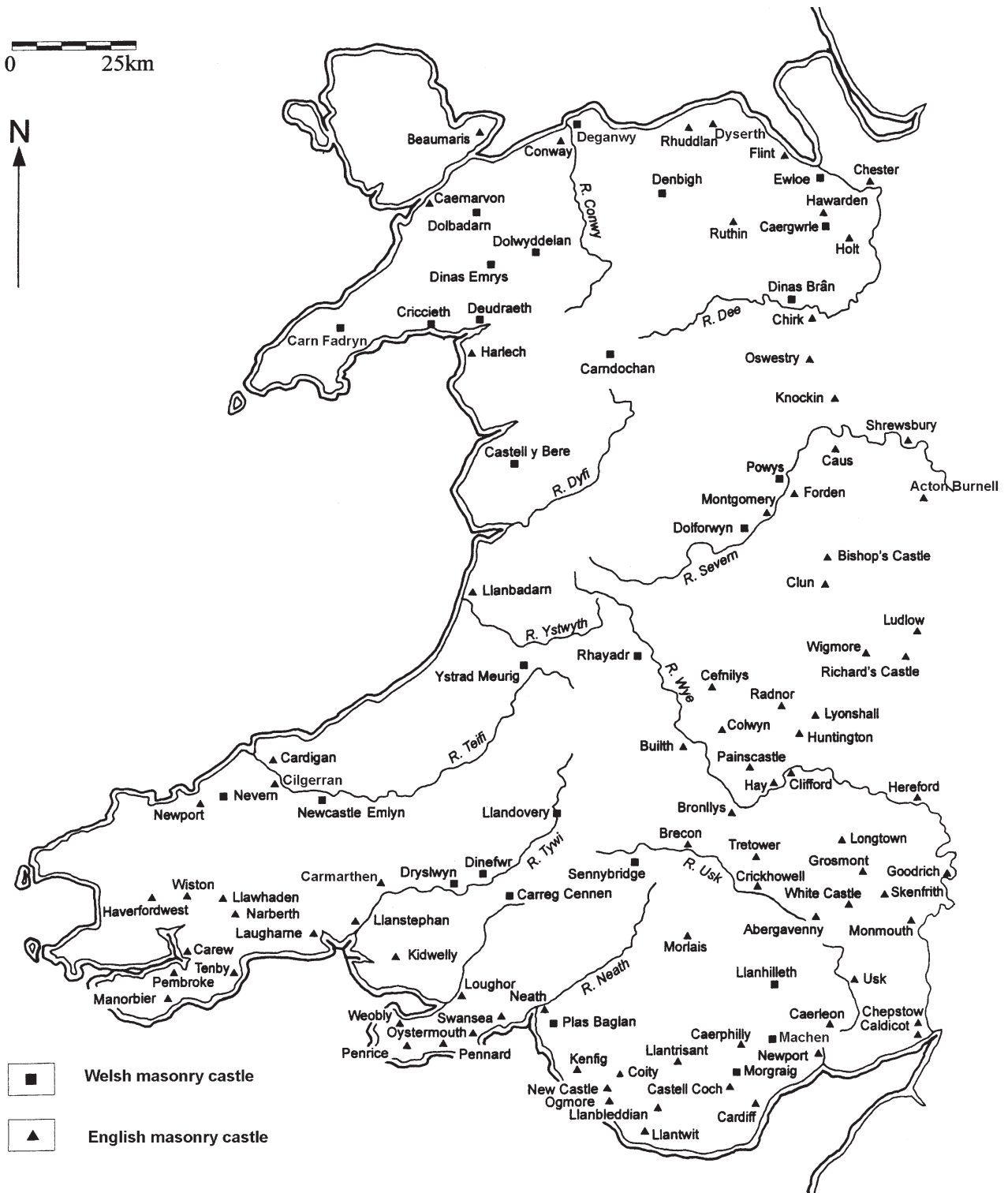


FIGURE 2.1  
Principal English and Welsh masonry castles of the mid to late 13th century, in Wales and the Marches (after Avent 1994b; King 1983)

Rhys Gryg mostly held Dinefwr Castle and Cantref Mawr, but spent much of his time battling with his nephews and brother over Llandovery Castle and Cantref Bychan (*AC* 66; *BT* 82–83; Lloyd 1912, 619; 1935, 160–162; Smith 1964, 263).

Llywelyn ap Iowerth brokered and enforced a settlement of the land disputes of south-west Wales in the Treaty of Aberdyfi of 1216, which apportioned the lands of the late Lord Rhys in Deheubarth amongst his most warlike sons. This process took place in the

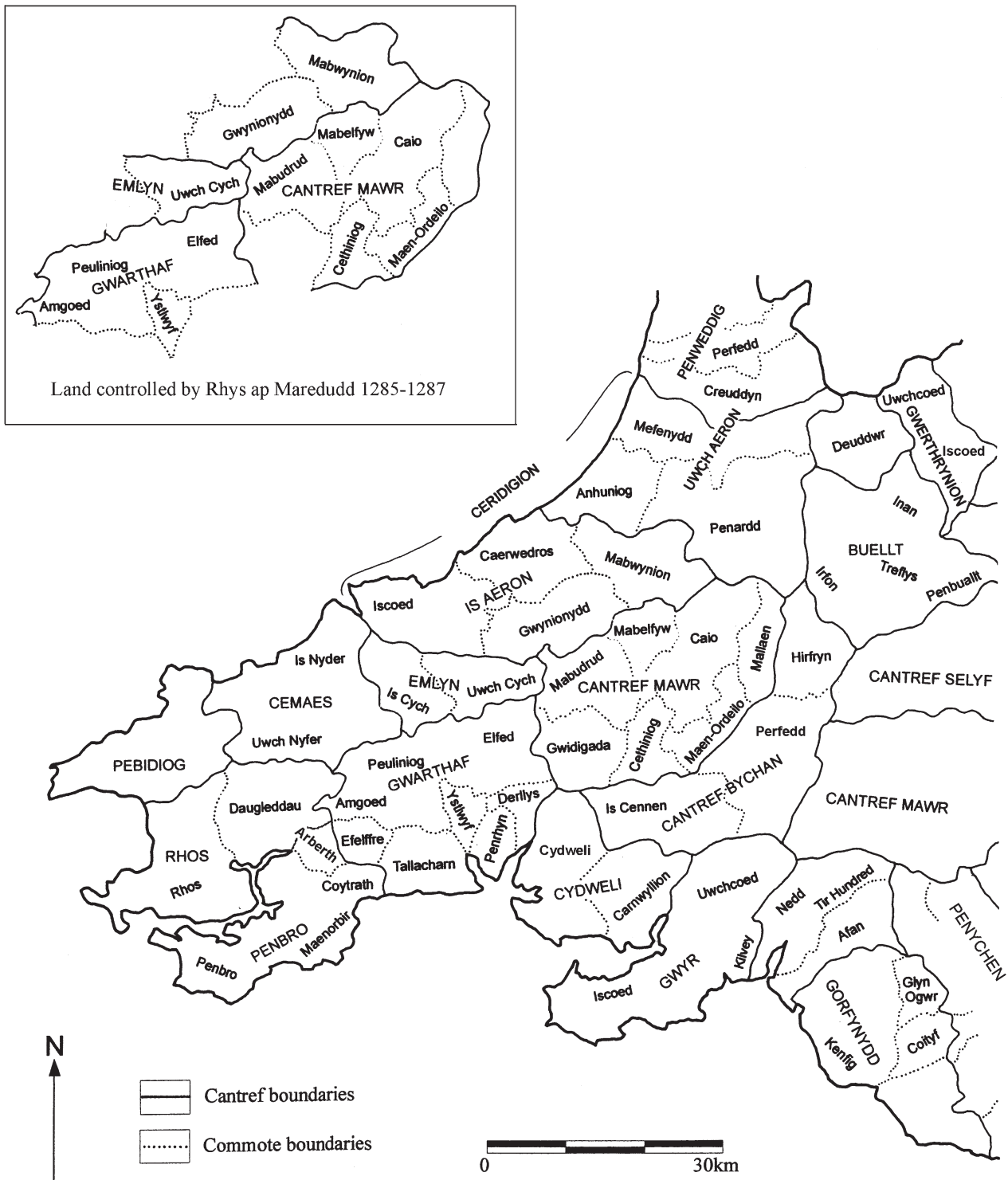


FIGURE 2.2

*Principal administrative divisions (commotes and cantrefi) of west Wales in the late 13th century (after Rees 1951)*

presence of his counsellors of Gwynedd and all the Welsh princes. Rhys Gryg was formally given Dinewr Castle, Cantref Mawr and Cantref Bychan (except the commotes of Mallaen and Hirfryn, but probably including the commote of Gwidigada) and the cantref of Cydweli (consisting of the commotes of Cydweli and Carnwyllion). Maelgwyn gained the cantrefi

of Emlyn, Gwarthaf and Cemaes, Peuliniog, and the castle of Cilgerran; the castle of Llandovery with its associated commotes of Mallaen and Hirfryn; the commotes of Gwynionydd and Mabwynion; and the castle of Carmarthen. Rhys Ieuanc and his brother Owain gained the three cantrefi (excluding the commotes of Gwynionydd and

DRYSLWYN CASTLE

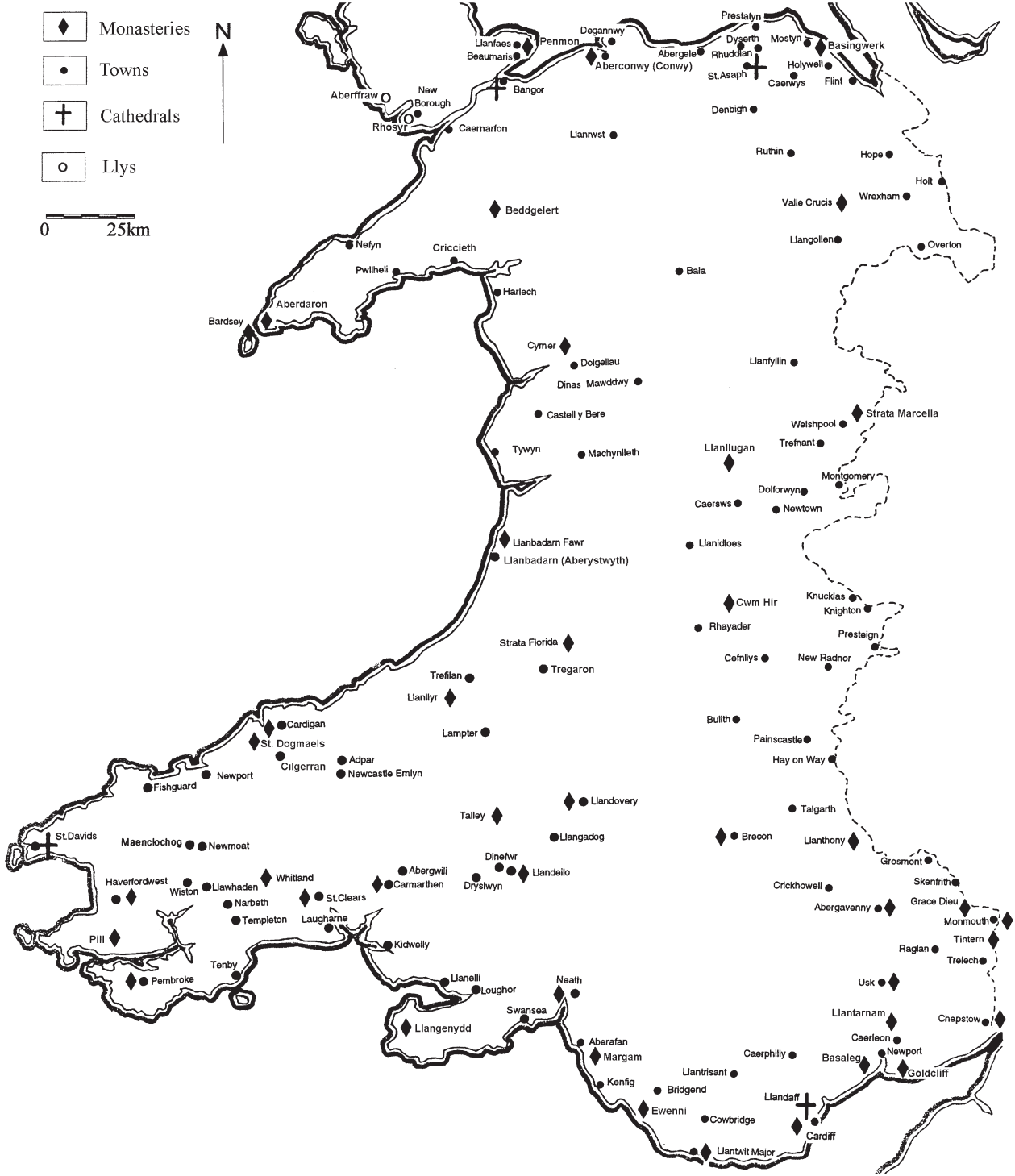


FIGURE 2.3

*Principal towns and monasteries in mid to late 13th century Wales (after Soulsby 1983; Davies 1987)*

Mabwynion) and the castle of Cardigan (*BT* 92; Lloyd 1912, 649; 1935, 167; Smith 1964, 264–265). This division proved to be an enduring one. When Rhys Ieuanc died in 1222, Llywelyn ap Iowerth divided his lands between his brother Owain and his uncle Maelgwyn. There is no record of any of his lands coming into the hands of his other uncle Rhys Gryg (*AC* 75; *BT* 99; Lloyd 1935, 173; Smith 1964, 265).

There is no mention of Dryslwyn in these divisions, although the other castles of the area were specifically named. Each of the three areas was centred on at least one castle. The naming of the castles in the *Brut-y-Tywysogyon* indicates that they were an important component of any inheritance and served as a status symbol for these lords of west Wales. By the early 13th century, castles must already have played a crucial role

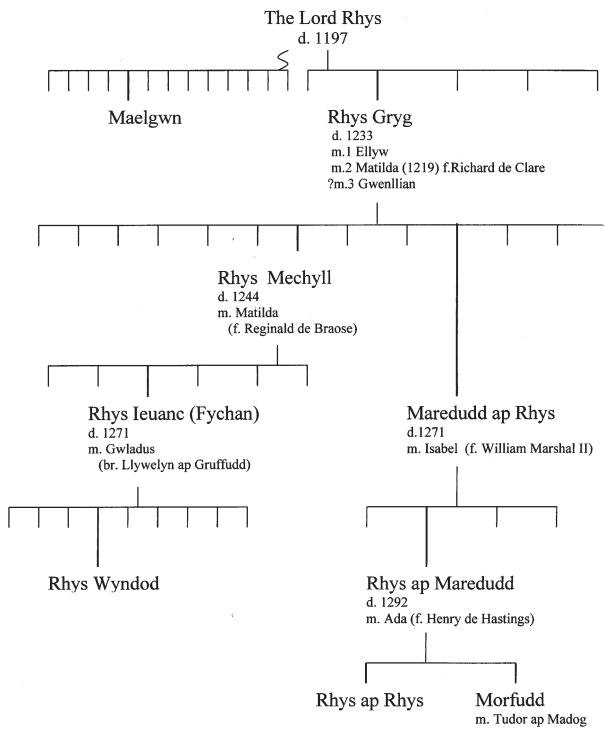


FIGURE 2.4

*Genealogy of the lords of Dryslwyn (after Bartrum 1974)*

in controlling and maintaining landholdings in Welsh society.

In 1219, Rhys Gryg married Matilda, daughter of Richard de Clare, Earl of Hertford (brother of Gilbert de Clare, Earl of Gloucester and Lord of Glamorgan), and the widow of William de Braose (*BT* 97; Bartrum 1974, iv R ap T 8) (Figure 2.4). Rhys' first wife, the mother of his eldest son Rhys Mechyll, must have died, leaving him free to seek an advantageous match. He was evidently of sufficient standing to marry a daughter of one of the most powerful Marcher families. After the death of William de Braose, the bulk of his estates had passed to his brother Reginald. William's widow Matilda and her son John inherited estates around Bramber (Sussex) and the Gower. Since 1216, Rhys Gryg had effectively controlled the lands of the Gower; by his marriage to Matilda, he probably sought to legitimise his occupation of them, whilst Matilda gained the effective ownership of lands to which she had only a titular claim. Any future offspring of this marriage would have a strong claim to the Marcher lordship of the Gower, leaving John de Braose with only Bramber (Altschul 1965, 30–31, 47). By Rhys' control of the Gower and the commote of Carnwylion, his lands separated the English at Carmarthen geographically from their countrymen in Glamorgan.

In 1227, Rhys Gryg was taken prisoner by his son 'Rhys Fychan' and only released on the surrender of a castle (*BT* 101). This son must have been 18 years of age or older and therefore the issue of his first

marriage. Genealogical records indicate that Rhys Gryg's first wife Ellyw was of noble Welsh stock and that they were probably married in the late 12th century. The eldest son of this marriage was Rhys Mechyll (Bartrum 1974, iv R ap T 8). This Rhys and his mother Ellyw were almost certainly the wife and son who had been held hostage in Rhys Gryg's place in 1213. Although there is little evidence for paternal or filial affection in the history of the Welsh lords and princes of the 12th and 13th centuries, some dispute must have been necessary to trigger such an event. Perhaps the son's demand for the surrender of the father's castle was the action of an insecure heir, who needed to have his own base. He may have doubted he would get his true inheritance, because Rhys had had another son by his second wife Matilda.

Llywelyn ap Iowerth campaigned throughout south Wales in 1220, confining the most powerful Marcher lord of west Wales, William Marshal, Earl of Pembroke, to his castle of Pembroke (*BT* 97; Lloyd 1935, 172–173). Between 1218 and 1220, Llywelyn compelled Rhys Gryg to return the commotes of Gwidigada, Cydweli and Carnwylion to the English (Davies 1987). It is also possible that Llywelyn forced Rhys to return the Gower to John de Braose, who had married Llywelyn's daughter Margaret in 1219 (Lloyd 1912, 658–659). The surrender of these commotes was part of Llywelyn's fulfilment of his commitment to enforce the Treaty of Worcester (1218), in which he and the English Crown had agreed a return to pre-dispute boundaries. The enforcement of this surrender and his role in brokering the Treaty of Aberdyfi were demonstrations of Llywelyn's assumed role as overlord of all Wales, for which he sought acceptance from the king of England (Smith 1998, 23–24). Whilst they illustrate the power and pre-eminence that Llywelyn ap Iowerth wielded throughout Wales at this time, these actions are unlikely to have endeared Rhys to Llywelyn and they not only sowed the seeds of the future enmity of the Dinefwr dynasty towards the house of Gwynedd, but also provoked its subsequent collaboration with the Earls Marshal.

William Marshal II, Earl of Pembroke, returned to Wales from his conquests in Ireland in the spring of 1223 with a large army. He used it to capture Cilgerran, Cardigan and Carmarthen, which had previously been under the control of Llywelyn ap Iowerth and his allies, and appears to have annexed much of Ceredigion, although he had no legitimate claim to these territories and castles. There was an indecisive battle on the bridge at Carmarthen with the forces of Llywelyn, led by his son Gruffudd and Rhys Gryg. Both sides came into the king's peace later in the year, but were not reconciled (*AC* 75–76; *BT* 99–100; Lloyd 1912, 661, 663; 1935, 173–174). Although there was good cause for further conflict between William Marshal and Rhys Gryg, there is no record of any. Both remained powerful men with considerable economic resources, but a need for defence. Both may

have been wary of the power of Llywelyn ap Iowerth and did not wish to give him a reason to return to west Wales. It is therefore likely that peace was maintained between them. William Marshal surrendered Carmarthen and Cardigan to the Crown in August 1226, acknowledging its right to them (Lloyd 1935, 176).

King John's successor, Henry III, led an expedition into Wales in 1228, but he and his army were defeated at Ceri by Llywelyn ap Iowerth (*BT* 101). This defeat reinforced the power that Llywelyn continued to wield throughout Wales. In 1231, Llywelyn, with the aid of Maelgwyn Ieuanc ap Maelgwyn and Owain ap Gruffudd, waged war through all of south and west Wales, seizing land, burning towns and capturing castles, including Kidwelly, Neath and Cardigan, which they took with catapults. Llywelyn renewed his raids in 1233, with the support of his new ally Richard Marshal, Earl of Pembroke. Rhys Gryg, Maelgwyn Ieuanc ap Maelgwyn and Owain ap Gruffudd all joined Llywelyn in ravaging south and west Wales, burning Cardiff and besieging Carmarthen for three months (*AC* 79; *BT* 102–103; Bridgeman 1876, 110; Lloyd 1912, 680; 1935, 179–80).

In 1234, the king granted Carmarthen and Cardigan back to Gilbert Marshal, who had succeeded his brother Richard, although Cardigan was still in the actual power of Llywelyn ap Iowerth (Lloyd 1935, 180).

### Maredudd ap Rhys

Rhys Gryg died at Llandeilo Fawr from wounds received at the siege of Carmarthen and was buried next to his father at St David's (*AC* 80; *BT* 103; Bridgeman 1876, 110; Lloyd 1935, 180). His lands, which presumably still comprised Cantref Mawr and Cantref Bychan (except the commotes of Mallaen and Hirfryn), descended to his sons, of whom two — Rhys Mechyll (often referred to in the chronicle texts as 'Rhys Fychan') and Maredudd ap Rhys — gained substantial inheritances.

The obvious division of land between the two half-brothers would have been into the two cantrefi, plus or minus the odd commote. Certainly, later references suggest that Maredudd ap Rhys held the bulk of the lands in Cantref Mawr, whilst Rhys Mechyll and his successors held much of Cantref Bychan. It might be expected that each landholding would be centred on a castle, as in the Treaty of Aberdyfi. Presuming that Llandovery and the commotes of Mallaen and Hirfryn did not form part of Rhys Gryg's lands, no major castle was definitively recorded in Cantref Bychan by this time (there is no record of Carreg Cennan prior to 1248); the only known castle in Cantref Mawr at this date was Dinefwr. Dinefwr Castle appears to have been included in the lordship of Rhys Mechyll, who was the oldest son and therefore

received the ancient seat of power and prominence. By this time, however, there may have been a new castle at Dryslwyn to serve as Maredudd's principle seat in Cantref Mawr. Projecting backwards from the later landholdings detailed in the 1270s and 1280s, it can be suggested that Rhys Gryg's estates were distributed between his two sons as follows: Rhys Mechyll received the commotes of Caio and Maen-Ordeilo, Perfedd and Is Cennan, and perhaps also Mabelfyw; Maredudd ap Rhys was assigned the commotes of Cethiniog, Mabudrud and Gwidigada, and probably Mabelfyw (Figure 2.2). The commote of Gwidigada was later regarded as part of the Welshry lands associated with the town of Carmarthen and therefore Maredudd's hold on it was always tenuous. On his father's death, Maredudd was not yet of an age to take up his inheritance and Gilbert Marshal, Earl of Pembroke, was appointed as his guardian. Such a powerful guardian undoubtedly helped keep at bay his acquisitive and warlike brother Rhys Mechyll.

There are almost no references to Maredudd ap Rhys prior to the 1250s. A reference to Rhys Gryg and his son Maredudd in 1222, when Talley Abbey was confirmed in its rights to hold lands at Llandeilo Fawr, is almost certainly inaccurate (Griffiths 1994, 259). It is likely that Maredudd was the offspring of Rhys Gryg's second marriage to Matilda de Braose and therefore that he was born after 1219 (Smith 1998, 103 n50). Consequently, he would have been too young to receive the chroniclers' attention until the 1240s and 1250s, when he reached maturity and entered into the Welsh arena of politics and warfare.

Maredudd ap Rhys' mother was recorded as being the niece of the last Marshal Earl of Pembroke and also related to the Earl of Gloucester, the Earl of Warrenne and the Earl Marshal, which indicates that she was Matilda de Braose (formerly Matilda de Clare) (Smith 1964, 266 n4; Griffiths 1966). However, Bartrum suggests that Maredudd was the son of Gwenllian, daughter of Elidir ap Owain and the third wife of Rhys Gryg (Bartrum 1974, iv R ap T 8). The important Marcher lord connections that Maredudd had throughout his life suggest it is more likely that he was closely related to some of the major Marcher families and therefore the son of Matilda, rather than a lady of the minor Welsh nobility. It is likely that Matilda de Braose survived Rhys Gryg. If so, she probably retained a settlement of land agreed in the marriage contract, perhaps consisting of the commotes of Perfedd and Is Cennan.

In order to ensure a smooth succession to his principality of Gwynedd and his overlordship of the other Welsh lords, Llywelyn ap Iowerth summoned all the Welsh lords to Strata Florida to swear fealty to his second son Dafydd in 1238 (*BT* 104). Henry III issued a mandate addressed to the barons of south and west Wales instructing them not to transfer their homage to Dafydd. The Crown was content to let Dafydd succeed to Llywelyn's hereditary lands, but not to

those acquired by conquest. The addressees of this mandate included Rhys Mechyll and Maredudd ap Rhys (Smith 1964, 266; *CCR 1237–42*, 123–124). This was the first mention of the name of Maredudd ap Rhys in the historical record.

Llywelyn ap Iowerth died on 11 April 1240 and power passed to his son Dafydd ap Llywelyn, who agreed that the homages of the lords of Wales should remain to the English Crown. Since 1216, Llywelyn had exerted a level of control over the lords of Deheubarth, effectively keeping their disputes in check. On 18 June 1240, Maredudd ap Rhys performed homage to King Henry III at Westminster for his lands. Gilbert Marshal was ordered to render to Maredudd *rationabilem partem suam de terris et tenementis que ipsum contingunt de honore de Calverdin*, ‘a reasonable portion of his lands and holdings which belong to him from the honour of Carmarthen’. The other lords of Deheubarth, including Rhys Mechyll, did homage a few days later for their lands as tenants-in-chief of the Crown (*AC 82–83*; *BT 105*; *CCR 1237–42*, 198; Smith 1964, 266).

Maredudd was swift to take advantage of the removal of Llywelyn’s guiding hand. In late 1240 or early 1241, he occupied the lands held by his half-brother Rhys Mechyll in Ystrad Tywi and, on 7 February 1241, he was ordered by the king to appear at Woodstock (Oxfordshire) to receive justice regarding these lands. This instruction was also conveyed to Gilbert Marshal, as he was still acting as Maredudd’s guardian. Smith has convincingly argued that, after the death of Llywelyn ap Iowerth, Gilbert and Maredudd acted in concert. Gilbert seized the lands around St Clears and took control of lands in Ceredigion. Walter Marshal seized the commotes of Ystlwyf and Emlyn from Cynan ap Hywel on behalf of his brother Gilbert, who then sold them to Maredudd ap Rhys for 300 marks (Bridgeman 1876, 115, 187). Maredudd subsequently held Ystlwyf under the Marshals’ overlordship (*CPR 1247–58*, 63). Meanwhile, Maredudd himself seized his half-brother’s remaining lands in the Tywi valley and the commote of Cydweli from Hawise de Londres. Since Gilbert already held the custody of Cardigan and Carmarthen, which included the commotes of Derllys, Elfed and Gwidigada (which he gave to Maredudd), these seizures consolidated almost all of the land on the eastern flank of his hereditary landholding under Maredudd’s control. By exploiting the power vacuum created by Llywelyn’s death, Gilbert and Maredudd had effectively acquired control of much of south-west Wales, with Gilbert’s lands now largely shielded behind the lands of Maredudd ap Rhys (Smith 1964, 267–268; *CCR 1237–42*, 280, 348–349; *Cal Inq Misc*, i 410, no. 1443).

Subsequently, the cantref of Emlyn was formally partitioned by King Henry between Walter Marshal and Maredudd ap Rhys. Walter acquired the commote of Emlyn Is Cych with its castle of Cilgerran, whilst Maredudd retained Emlyn Uwch Cych and

constructed a new castle. This new castle of Newcastle Emlyn was sited on a long peninsular projecting into the River Teifi (Soulsby 1983, 196; Parry 1987; King 1983, 59, 561–562).

In the spring of 1241, Maredudd married Isobel or Isobella, the daughter of William Marshal II and niece of Gilbert Marshal (Bartrum 1974, iv R ap T 11). The match was probably made while Maredudd was still Gilbert’s ward (Lewis 1998, 22). This marriage alliance provided mutual reinforcement for the recent bold territorial acquisitions of both Gilbert and Maredudd. In addition to helping Gilbert secure the eastern edge of the Marshal lands in Pembrokeshire, the marriage gave Maredudd powerful connections with the Marcher lords.

Gilbert Marshal died unexpectedly at a tournament in June 1241 and Maredudd lost his guardian and protector (*BT 84*). It was unlikely that Maredudd could retain the lands he acquired earlier in the year without Gilbert to support him, although he did retain the commote of Emlyn Uwch Cych and pressed on with the construction of his new castle. King Henry reclaimed Cardigan and Carmarthen from Marshal control and these towns were subsequently held for him by his seneschal, John of Monmouth (Lloyd 1935, 182). The king marched into north Wales with a substantial armed force and pushed back the borders of Dafydd ap Llywelyn’s inheritance, constructing a new castle at Dyserth. The king then kept Dafydd’s brother Gruffudd ap Llywelyn as a hostage in the Tower of London (*AC 83–84*; *BT 105–106*).

The following year, Maredudd was required to surrender the commote of Gwidigada, which he had acquired from Gilbert Marshal, since it was found by inquisition to belong to the king’s demesne as an integral part of the royal lordship of Carmarthen (*CPR 1232–47*, 289; Daniel-Tyssen 1878, 43). This commote was transferred to the control of the new royal seneschal of Carmarthen town and castle. Maredudd was also required to give up the commote of Cydweli to Hawise de Londres (the widow of Walter de Braose), who married Patrick de Chaworth in 1243 (Lloyd 1912, 699; 1935, 183).

Rhys Mechyll died in 1244, barely eleven years after his father (*BT 106*). He was survived by his widow Matilda de Braose, to whom the protection of the Crown was extended (Lloyd 1935, 183). This Matilda was the daughter of Reginald de Braose and a niece of the Matilda de Braose who had been married to Rhys Gryg. Rhys Mechyll’s eldest son Rhys Ieuanc, also known as Rhys Fychan, took over all his father’s lands. He was probably only a few years younger than his uncle Maredudd ap Rhys.

Following the death of Gruffudd ap Llywelyn on 1 March 1244, his brother Dafydd ap Llywelyn rose in revolt. All the Welsh lords followed him, including Maredudd ap Rhys and Rhys Fychan. They confined the English to their castles and Dafydd and his forces burned Carmarthen (*AC 84–85*; *BT 106*; Lloyd 1912, 703n). On 27 December 1244, Richard de Clare was

empowered to receive Maredudd back into the king's peace and service, offering him the promise that the king would provide him with justice in his courts about the lands which he said should fall to him by hereditary right (*CPR 1232–47*, 447). The following year, an English army commanded by Henry III came to Wales to quell the rebellion, but suffered heavy casualties as they pushed the Welsh back to the River Conwy. Henry had to content himself with reconstructing the castle at Deganwy on the eastern side of the river (*AC 85*; *BT 107*).

The rebellion lost its momentum when Dafydd ap Llywelyn died on 25 February 1246. Maredudd ap Rhys was received to the king's peace on 27 April, followed by Rhys Fychan and the other lords of Deheubarth at various dates between April and November (Smith 1964, 269; *CPR 1232–47*, 479, 485). Maredudd ap Rhys and Rhys Fychan were both confirmed in their territories: Maredudd ap Rhys retained the commotes of Emlyn Uwch Cych and Ystlwyf, as well as his commotes in Cantref Mawr, and he was recognised as Lord of Cethiniog (Lloyd 1935, 185). This settlement was brokered by the seneschal Nicholas de Molis, who afterwards led a largely Welsh and Marcher army northwards with Maredudd ap Rhys and Maredudd ap Owain to subdue the final vestiges of Dafydd's revolt. It may have been on this expedition that Dryslwyn Castle was captured for Maredudd ap Rhys by Molis. The two Maredudds dispossessed Maelgwyn Fychan of his lands, acting in the name of the king (*AC 86*; *BT 107*). It is unclear who gained control of these lands, which included the castle of Llandovery and the associated commotes of Hirfryn and Mallaen, but they were probably seized by Maredudd ap Rhys.

Court actions in 1250 show that Maredudd was certainly in possession of the commote of Cethiniog and Llandovery Castle in that year. In a surviving legal document, Maredudd was recorded as being in dispute with the Bishop of St David's over the appointment of the incumbent of the church at Llandovery. It is clear from this court case that Maredudd still had interests in the town of Llandovery and that he was willing to engage in legal actions to defend his rights (Edwards 1935, 52; Davies 1940, 19–21).

In 1248, Rhys Fychan regained the castle of Carreg Cennan, 'which his mother had treacherously placed in the hands of the French' (*BT 108*). This event confirms the presence of Rhys Fychan in Cantref Bychan, lands he had inherited from his father Rhys Mechyll. Rhys Mechyll had married Matilda or Maud, daughter of Reginald de Braose (Bridgeman 1876, 126–127; Lloyd 1935, 185; Bartrum 1974, iv R ap T 8). She survived her husband and probably retained the castle and its associated lands. She then passed them to her Braose kinsmen, an action later described by a Welsh scribe or translator as 'treacherously given to the French', a term habitually applied to any

foreigner. An alternative interpretation of the chronicle entry is that it was Rhys Fychan's grandmother, another Matilda de Braose and the widow of Rhys Gryg, who acquired these commotes on the death of Rhys Gryg and subsequently passed them to the Braose family.

In 1251, an alliance was sworn at Caernarfon between Llywelyn ap Gruffudd with his brother Owain Goch and Maredudd ap Rhys with his nephew Rhys Fychan, in which each party agreed to help and maintain the other against all living men as though they were sworn brothers (Edwards 1940, 160–161; Smith 1964, 269; 1998, 68; Davies 1987, 309). This arrangement marks the start of the relationship between Llywelyn, the emerging Prince of Gwynedd, and the lords of Deheubarth. The alliance formed part of the network of contacts and alliances that Llywelyn was developing to protect himself against the activities of the Marcher lords and the other Welsh lords as he built up his power in north Wales. Llywelyn's system of alliances was further extended and reinforced in the 1250s. His sister Gwladus married Rhys Fychan, linking the royal families of Gwynedd and Deheubarth (*BT 112*). Consequently, Rhys Fychan increased his power and reputation, expanding from his lands around Dinefwr apparently with the support of the English Crown (Lloyd 1935, 186, 187).

Following the death of Anselm Marshal in 1246 the male line of the Marshals had now failed entirely and the estates were broken up amongst co-heiresses (*AC 86–88*). After this division, there was no single powerful lord controlling and representing Marcher interests in the west of Wales. In 1254, the royal possessions in Wales, including Cardigan and Carmarthen, were granted to the Lord Edward, the 15-year-old son of Henry III (Lloyd 1935, 186). Contact was also maintained with Maredudd ap Rhys, as he was given a safe-conduct to visit Henry III at Westminster at Easter 1255 (*CPR 1247–58*, 393). It is not known if he made the trip.

By 1256, Maredudd had been ejected from what he regarded as his hereditary lands of Hirfryn, Perfedd, Mallaen, Caio, Cethiniog, Emlyn Uwch Cych and Ystlwyf through the combined efforts of Rhys Fychan and Stephen Bauzan, the Lord Edward's officer in south-west Wales (*AC 91*; Smith 1998, 92). Left landless, he went north to assist Llywelyn ap Gruffudd in regaining the lands of Meirionydd and Perfeddwlad (Rees 1951, plate 28) in north and mid Wales from Edward, who had been taxing the local people so heavily that they had appealed to Llywelyn for aid (Lloyd 1912, 717; Smith 1998, 85). In return, Llywelyn's forces were instrumental in the reinstatement of Maredudd in both his own territory and the lands of Rhys Fychan, which he claimed by hereditary right (*AC 91*; *BT 110*). Together, these probably comprised the whole of Cantref Mawr and Cantref Bychan, reconstituting the lordship of Ystrad Tywi, to be ruled from the castle of Dinefwr. His nephew Rhys Fychan