



***“Marshal towers” in South-West Wales:  
Innovation, Emulation and Mimicry***

***John Wiles***



*Fig 1. Pembroke Castle Great Tower from the NW. Crown copyright reserved.*

### **“Marshal Towers” in South-West Wales: Innovation, Emulation and Mimicry**

*John Wiles*

The great tower of Pembroke Castle was built by Earl William the Marshal from c. 1200. Thought to have been modelled on similar towers raised by Philip Augustus of France that were known as *tours philippiennes*,<sup>1</sup> the Pembroke tower has itself been identified as the model for other great round castle towers in Britain.<sup>2</sup> In the following article this proposition is tested in the context of south-west Wales. The results indicate that, whilst the Pembroke tower can be seen to stand at the head of a series built by the Marshal and his sons, the model for those raised by neighbouring lords is more likely to have been Cilgerran, the ‘ornate castle of mortar and stones’ commenced by William Marshal the younger in 1223.<sup>3</sup> This finding provides a springboard from which to explore a complex pattern of emulation and sometimes mimicry, that is, the appearance rather than the substance of a particular form. The various towers can be recognised as symbolically charged structures, each embodying something of their lord’s identity and feudal status, whilst at the same time being strongholds capable of resisting assault.

### **Historical context**

Earl William the Marshal (d. 1219) was the very flower of knighthood and England’s mightiest vassal.<sup>4</sup> He had married the de Clare heiress in 1189 gaining vast estates that included Netherwent, with Chepstow and Usk castles, as well as the great Irish lordship of Leinster. He was granted Pembroke and the earldom that went with it at King John’s accession in 1199, probably gaining possession on his first visit to his Irish lands in 1200/01.<sup>5</sup> Although effectively exiled or retired to Ireland between 1207 and 1211 (Crouch, 2002, 101-115), the Marshal consolidated and expanded his position in south-west Wales, acquiring Cilgerran by conquest (1204) and Haverfordwest by grant (1213), as well as gaining custody of Cardigan, Carmarthen and Gower (1214). In 1215, however, whilst the Marshal, soon to be regent, was taken up with the wars in England, a winter campaign led by Llywelyn ap Iorwerth of Gwynedd ushered in a Welsh resurgence, so that at the Marshal’s death all save the Pembroke lordship, with Haverfordwest, had been lost. Llywelyn, who had been granted custody of Cardigan and Carmarthen in 1218, returned to devastate the region in 1220, again destroying many of its castles.<sup>6</sup>

This situation was reversed by William Marshal the younger (d. 1231) who, in 1223, brought over an army from Leinster and recovered first Cardigan and then Carmarthen, before starting to rebuild Cilgerran.<sup>7</sup> His campaign also restored the neighbouring lordships, effectively recasting their relationships with Pembroke, one, Cemaes, now becoming subordinate to it.<sup>8</sup> William was called away from Cilgerran to answer for his seizure of royal castles and was subsequently deprived of Cardigan and Carmarthen on the occasion of his going to Ireland (1226).<sup>9</sup> He was followed as earl by three of his brothers, the turbulent Richard (d. 1234), who warred with the king, besieging Carmarthen Castle in concert with Welsh princes, Gilbert (d. 1241) and Walter (d. 1245). Gilbert regained Carmarthen following Richard’s war and took back Cardigan from the Welsh in 1240, although both were retained by the crown on his demise.<sup>10</sup> The youngest brother, Anselm (d. 1245), did not live to enter into his inheritance and following his death the Marshal lands were broken up amongst heiresses.<sup>11</sup>

### **“Marshal Towers” - Pembroke Castle & borough walls**

In addition to its great tower, another twelve cylindrical towers on Pembroke’s castle and borough

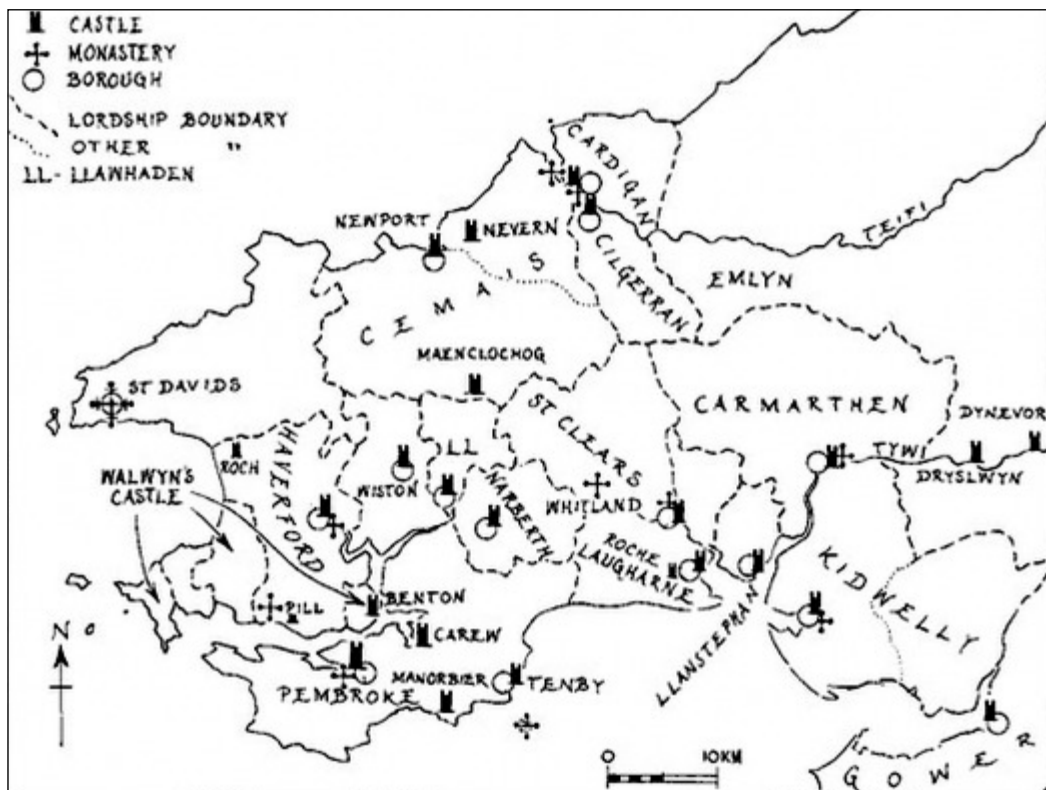


Fig 2. Map of south-west Wales showing sites mentioned in the text.

walls have been attributed to William the Marshal.<sup>12</sup> Although it has been suggested that much of the castle was in fact built by William de Valence in the later part of the century,<sup>13</sup> the case remains strong for the whole of this great work, castle and borough together extending over a thousand yards, having been accomplished by the sons of the Marshal if not by their father (below). Away from Pembroke, cylindrical towers at Haverfordwest as well as at Cilgerran, can also be attributed to the younger Marshals, whilst diminutive examples at Tenby and Carmarthen could be the work of either generation.

The Pembroke great tower is a freestanding cylindrical structure 15.8m in diameter and 23m high<sup>14</sup> (figs. 1, 5-7). Entered at the first floor, it had three storeys pierced for loopholes above a basement, all joined by a spiral stair. The loopholes were carefully sited so as not to be blanked by the adjacent curtain wall. The first and second floors have fireplaces, the second and third, two-light windows fitted with seats. The more ornate second floor window is set above the entrance, matching an arrangement seen in the

earlier great tower at Conisbrough (Goodall, 2011, 163). The third floor window looks out over Monkton Pill to the Priory and park beyond (fig. 8). Although there are no latrines, a bridge from the narrow doorway on the second floor would have led onto the curtain wall and so onto the cliff-edge facilities. Evidence for elaborately carpentered ceilings<sup>15</sup> and partitions<sup>16</sup> attests to the richness of the tower's fittings going against its characterisation as 'dark and cheerless' (Renn, 1968, 42-3). Rising from a prominent battered base, the tower is topped by a distinctive domed roof that contains a further small room and supported a three tiered parapet rising to a central round turret.

The remaining towers at Pembroke are also cylindrical structures comprehensively pierced for loopholes. However, none, save for Barnard's, set in advance of the borough walls' far north-eastern angle, can be regarded as freestanding 'great towers'. The castle's inner court wall is flanked by the 8.25m diameter Dungeon Tower as well as by the D-plan Horseshoe Gate.<sup>17</sup> Another five cylindrical towers straddle the

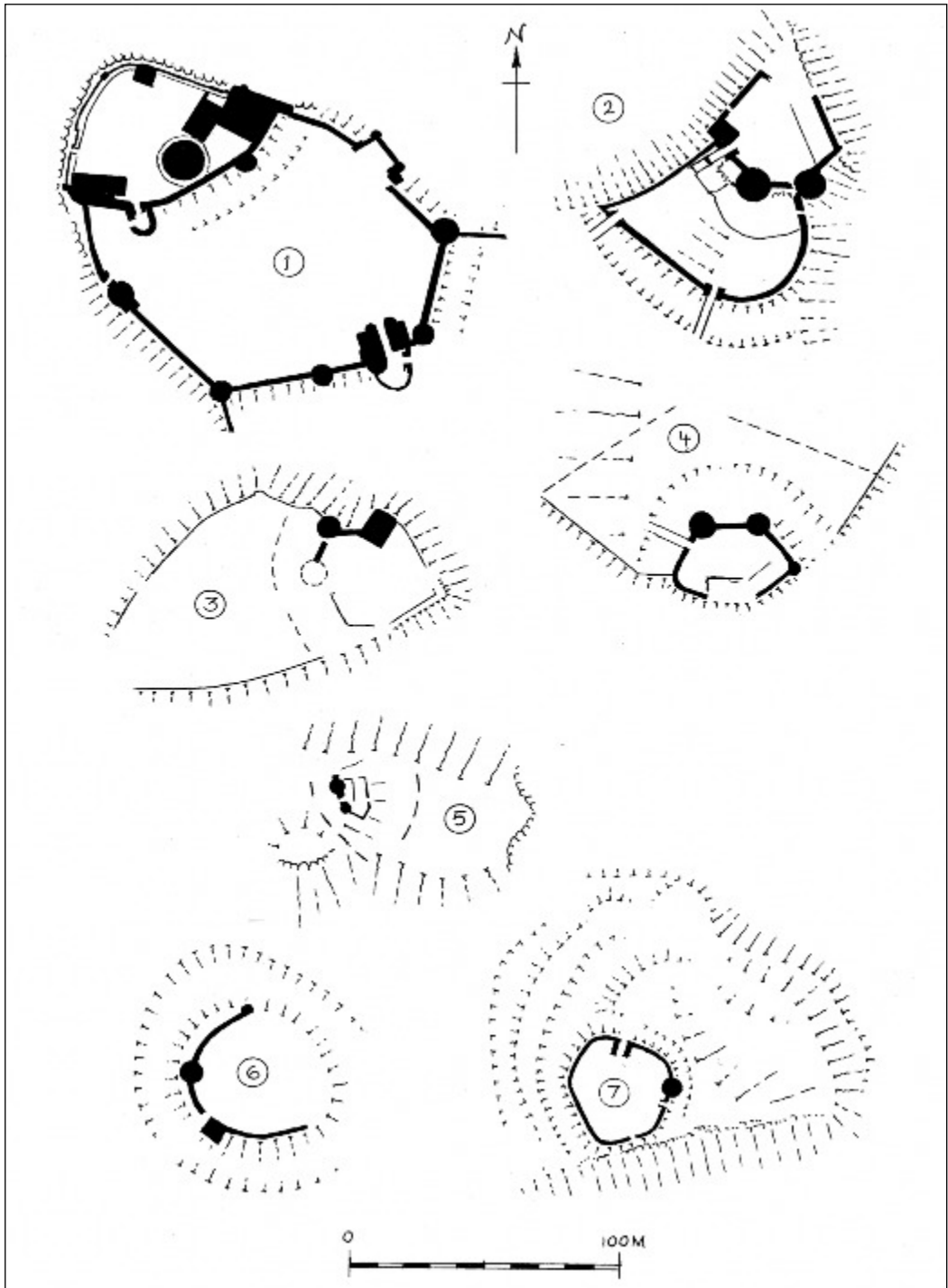


Fig 3. Castle plans, early 13th century: 1. Pembroke; 2. Cilgerran; 3. Haverfordwest; 4. Laugharne; 5. Benton, with speculative outline of outer court; 6. Llawhaden; 7. Llansteffan.

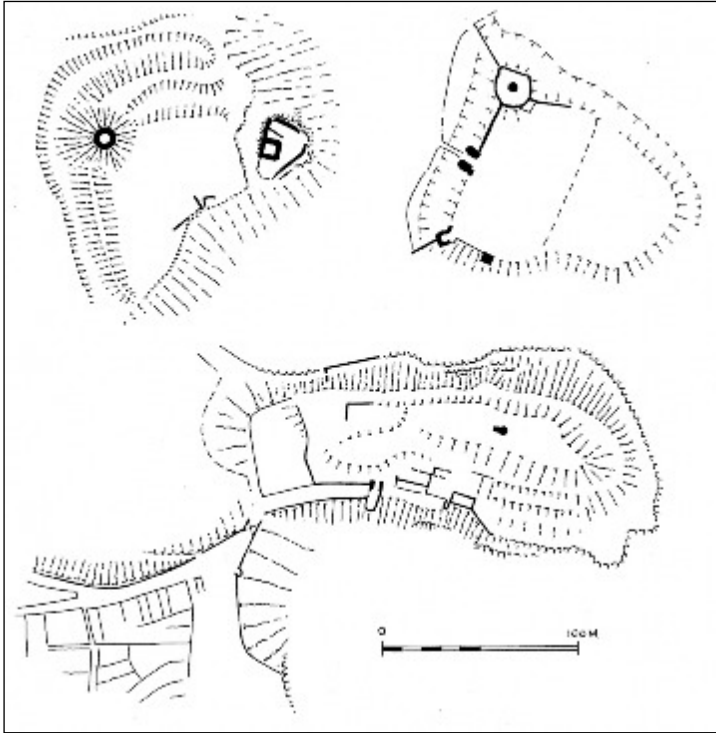


Fig 4. Castle plans, clockwise from top left, Nevern, Carmarthen, Tenby.

outer court wall. The two nearest the inner court, the Monkton and Westgate towers, have diameters of 9.0m and 10m respectively, the remaining three being 7.0-7.5m across.<sup>18</sup> Excepting the two-storey Monkton Tower, all have two floors above their basements and at least two appear to have had roof vaults.<sup>19</sup> Another six cylindrical towers studded the borough walls.<sup>20</sup> Of these, the two storey, 7.5m diameter Gazebo and Gun towers are thought to have had vaulted roofs, as does the three storey, 9.0m diameter Barnard's Tower. This last is entered at its third storey through a passage building containing a latrine, its upper apartment having a fireplace and a two-light window looking out over the mill pool below (fig 9).

#### Tenby

At Tenby, the second of the earls' seats within the Pembroke lordship, a much altered, 5.3m diameter two-storey tower with a vaulted roof stands perhaps 10m high on the summit of the castle headland<sup>21</sup> (fig 10). The tower's upper storey was pierced for loop-holes, of which one remains above a blocked doorway opposite the existing entrance, at least one other having had a window inserted into its opening.<sup>22</sup>

#### Carmarthen

The footings of a similarly diminutive, 5.0m diameter tower with a gap probably representing a ground floor entrance, have been excavated on the summit of Carmarthen's revetted castle mound.<sup>23</sup> A common origin seems likely for these distinctively diminutive towers and this can be identified with Marshal tenure or custody. Carmarthen's tower could be attributed to the elder Marshal in the emergency of 1214-15<sup>24</sup> or to William the younger in 1223-26, if not to the near decade of Gilbert's tenure. Although these towers may be thought too small to have acted as 'great towers', they recall or rather invoke that at Pembroke in being both freestanding and prominently sited.

#### Cilgerran

The work begun at Cilgerran in 1223, the 'ornate castle of mortar and stones',<sup>25</sup> included at least the earlier of the two great round towers that straddle its inner court wall. These both have three storeys above basements, linked by spiral stairs and all pierced for simple loopholes<sup>26</sup> (fig 11). The tower interiors are placed off-centre, effectively thicken-





*Fig 5. Pembroke Castle. L-R: Great Tower, Dungeon Tower, Great Hall (part) from the outer court.*

ing their external walls in an arrangement that may also be seen in Usk Castle's South Tower.<sup>27</sup> The castle differs markedly from Pembroke in that most of its openings are round-headed, in contrast to the earlier castle's transitional, pointed architecture. This difference may reflect expediency rather than intent, the castle having been constructed almost entirely from the native slate and without recourse to freestone.

The earlier **East Tower** is markedly irregular in plan, being 11.85-12.6m across. Like Pembroke's Monkton Tower, it adjoins a minor gate or postern. The tower is entered from the foot of its stair, which extends to the ground and opens beside a larger basement doorway flanked by loops. Crude two-light windows on the first and second floors are set above this basement doorway, recalling the entrance composition of the Pembroke great tower (fig 12). The uppermost storey has a fireplace and a similar window looking out across the Teifi gorge to the wooded plateau of Coedmore. The rather larger, 13.3m diameter **West Tower** was originally entered at first floor level in the manner of a great tower. Its first and second floors have fireplaces, the third and fourth single light windows set above the entrance. Although the towers lack latrines, both communicate with wall-walks to either side, the West Tower also being joined to the gatehouse by a mural passage, recalling those linking Pembroke's Great Gatehouse and Barbican Tower.<sup>28</sup>

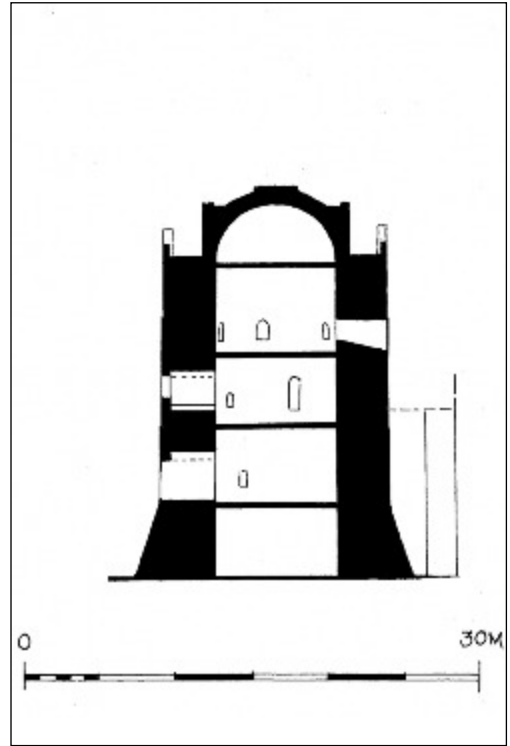
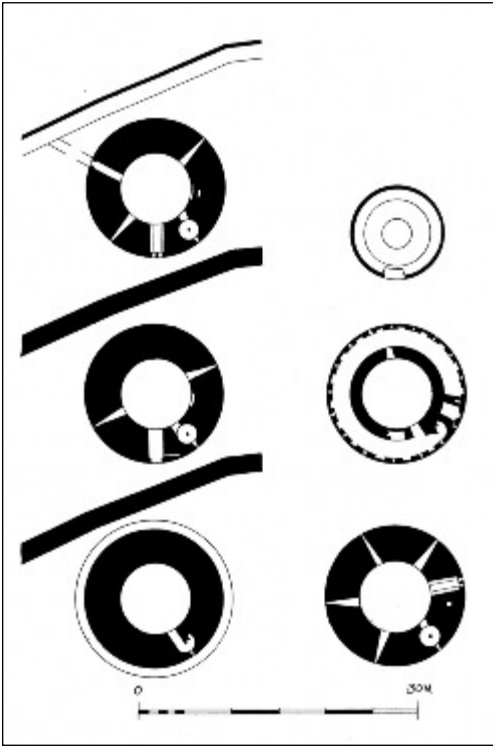
### Haverfordwest

An earlier thirteenth century date is suggested for the 8.0m diameter North Tower at Haverfordwest Castle.<sup>29</sup> The tower is of one build with the curtain wall to the east, which is overlain by masonry characteristic of works undertaken for Queen Eleanor at the castle in the late thirteenth century (fig. 15). Entered at its first floor, this has two upper storeys linked by a spiral stair. As with Cilgerran's East Tower, it appears to have adjoined a minor gate and the castle may originally have had a plan similar to that of Cilgerran, a second round tower beside the main entrance being recorded in a survey of 1577.<sup>30</sup> Indeed, it is possible that the North Tower is contemporary with Cilgerran's West Tower, as both exhibit clear breaks in construction below noticeably tapering upper storeys (figs 14, 16). Unlike the Cilgerran towers, however, the North Tower projects entirely from the curtain wall, recalling rather the two Marshal period towers at Usk, that are thought to have been constructed before 1233.<sup>31</sup>

### Shared characteristics

Although these 'Marshal' towers make up a markedly diverse collection, they share certain characteristics that distinguish them from great round towers raised elsewhere in Wales in the same period. All appear to have been comprehensively pierced for simple, narrow loopholes commanding severely limited fields of fire.<sup>32</sup> None appear to

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TOP LEFT: Fig 6. Pembroke Great Tower floor plans, reconstruction of original layout, after King, 1978, figs 2-3. TOP RIGHT: Fig 7. Pembroke Great Tower section, after Toy, 1966, fig. on p. 114.

BELOW: Fig 8. Pembroke Castle and Monkton Priory from Monkton Park, with dovecote in the foreground.





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*Fig 9A. Barnard's Tower and town wall spur, Pembroke, from the west. Inset: Floor plan from Mike Salter's Medieval Town Walls.*





*Fig 9B. Barnard's Tower, Pembroke.*

have had integral latrines, but could, as at Pembroke and Cilgerran, have had indirect access to them via wall-walks or mural passages, arguably manifesting a Marshal preference for sanitation above convenience.<sup>33</sup> Although the dome of the Marshal's great tower is repeated at Tenby, comparable two-light windows are found at Cilgerran as well as Barnard's Tower. It is notable that these Marshal towers lack the prominent string-courses separating batter and drum that characterise those of the Brecon region.<sup>34</sup>

### **Towers of neighbouring lords**

Cylindrical towers were also raised at the castles of neighbouring and subordinate lords. Although that recently excavated on the summit of Nevern's castle mound could significantly pre-date Pembroke's great tower, the remaining examples are thought to have been constructed in the wake of William Marshal's campaign of 1223. Two-towered plans at Laugharne and Benton recall Cilgerran, as does the position astride their castle walls of single towers at Llawhaden and Llansteffan. In contrast, Manorbier's Round Tower is best compared with Barnard's Tower and finds an echo in the repeated roof vault of one of Kidwelly's four inner court towers. The remains of a larger tower at Narberth could post-date the Marshal period, as may have a now vanished example at Cardigan. Further afield, the great round tower at Dinefwr, in the Tywi valley east of Carmarthen, can be seen to belong to a non-Marshall tradition.

### **Nevern**

The Nevern tower is a 9.0m diameter structure built of clay-bonded stone and is assumed to have been built prior to Rhys ap Gruffudd's dispossession of



*Fig 10. Tenby Castle, summit tower.*

the fitz Martins of Cemais in 1190 and the dismantling of the castle in 1195,<sup>35</sup> (fig 17). It has, however, also been suggested that it was constructed in the opening years of the following century, between the Marshal's campaign in 1204, that gained him Cilgerran, and Llywelyn's of 1215, that resulted in the first mention of Newport Castle.<sup>36</sup> It might further be suggested that the castle's two great towers (fig 4) manifest dual ownership or custody, as was the case with Powis Castle in the 15th century.<sup>37</sup> This duality might also be recognised in the presence of two castles at Newport.<sup>38</sup>

### **Laugharne**

Laugharne's twin towers are attributed to Guy de Brian (d. c. 1268), who had succeeded to the lordship by 1240.<sup>39</sup> Respectively 10m and 9.0m in diameter, the larger tower had three storeys over a basement, the smaller only two<sup>40</sup> (figs 18-20). Both had curving wall stairs and loopholes set in large arched recesses. The larger tower was entered at an intermediate level between ground and first floors, recalling, but not repeating, a great tower mode of entry. All but its second floor were vaulted, the roof being a fine pointed dome. An original fireplace remains on the upper storey, where recesses may have been intended for windows rather than loopholes.<sup>41</sup> Neither tower originally had latrines, although they communicated with adjoining wall-

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*TOP: Fig 11. Cilgerran Castle, towers from outer court.*

*BELOW: Fig 12. Cilgerran Castle, towers from inner court.*





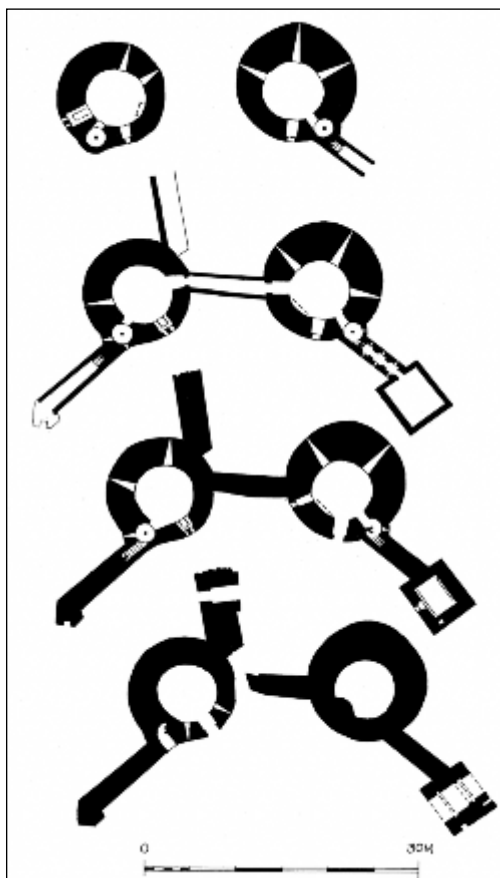


Fig 13. Cilgerran. Tower floor plans; reconstruction of original layout, based on plan in Hilling 2000. Note latrine at end of east curtain (left) and latrine shaft and drain in gatehouse (bottom right).

ABOVE RIGHT: Figs. 14 & 15. Haverfordwest Castle, the North Tower from the inner and outer courts. The curtain wall to the right of the tower is topped by a section of masonry characteristic of late thirteenth century work at the castle.

heads. The larger tower's internal arrangements are not incompatible with the curtain above the gate having been accessed from both the second and third floors, recalling arrangements at Cilgerran.

### Benton

Benton Castle also has two cylindrical towers linked by a curtain wall, here pierced for a gate or door.<sup>42</sup> The towers are 7.5m and 5.0m in diameter and rise three and two storeys respectively above elevated rock bases (fig 21). When viewed prior to restoration



they lacked fireplaces and integral stairs, although it appears that the upper tower's first floor was accessed from the smaller tower's lower floor, recalling Cilgerran's mural passage. The larger tower has simple loopholes towards the field and two-light windows overlooking the court. A square latrine annex may be a later addition, as is the tower's octagonal parapet. The castle resembles Cilgerran in having originally been constructed without freestone and its arches range from round to pointed. The diminutive castle enclosure was almost entirely taken up with a building raised over a sunken basement, its main floor corresponding to the towers' elevated bases.<sup>43</sup> No trace remains of an outer earthwork enclosure<sup>44</sup> (fig 3.5).





*Fig 16. Cilgerran Castle, upper part of West Tower showing the break in construction.*

### **Llawhaden and Llansteffan**

The cylindrical towers at Llawhaden and Llansteffan are both reduced to stumps. The Llawhaden tower was 8.5m in diameter and that at Llansteffan, which includes the base of a latrine shaft, was 7.25m across.<sup>45</sup> Both castles had square gate towers, echoing the pairing of round and rectangular towers seen at Manorbier<sup>46</sup> (fig 22) and, more dramatically and Pembroke itself (fig. 24).

### **Manorbier**

The stone-walled enceinte established at Manorbier, probably in the 1230s, included the prominent Round Tower.<sup>47</sup> This cylindrical structure is 7.0m diameter and rises through three storeys above a basement to a masonry dome. Its upper floors are linked by curving wall stairs and are pierced for loopholes set in arched recesses, the two uppermost floors also having two-light windows facing the field. There are entrances at ground and first floor levels, as well as doorways opening on to adjoining wall-walks. The Round Tower recalls Barnard's Tower in its position at the corner of a walled trace, as well as in its roof vault and very similar outward facing windows. Against this, the Manorbier tower communicates too freely to be regarded as self contained and signally lacks Barnard's fireplace and latrine.

It is possible to make a connection between Manorbier's Round Tower to the four at the corners of Kidwelly Castle's inner court (Kenyon 2002, 37-41), which can also be seen as a variation on the twin towers at Cilgerran and Laugharne. Although conventionally dated to the 1270s (Kenyon 2002, 9, 11), it is possible that the Kidwelly towers, that vary considerably in detail, were constructed rather earlier in the period after the castle's recovery from the Welsh in 1243. Of these towers the south-western had a vaulted roof, a feature repeated when it was raised by a storey in around 1300, whilst the four storey South-east Tower, set immediately within the castle's principal entrance, was the best appointed and originally the highest of the four.

### **Narberth**

Only a fragment remains of a large, 14m diameter round tower at Narberth that was entered through a square forebuilding, had fireplaces as well as integral latrines and a prominent string-course above its batter.<sup>48</sup> These features count against a Marshal attribution and the tower is likely to have been the work of Roger Mortimer of Wigmore (d. 1282) who inherited the lordship through an heiress.

### **Cardigan**

The vanished great tower at Cardigan is thought to have been a freestanding cylindrical structure.<sup>49</sup> Money was provided for it in 1250, although it could have been begun a decade before by Walter Marshal who recovered and restored the castle at his brother Gilbert's behest.<sup>50</sup>

### **Dinefwr**

The 12.5m diameter tower at Dinefwr is thought to have been built by Rhys Gryg (d. 1233), one of the sons of Rhys ap Gruffudd.<sup>51</sup> It appears to have lacked loopholes and has a prominent string-course above its batter. Rhys Gryg is unlikely to have adopted a Marshal model for his tower. Although in his fatal final campaign he allied with Richard Marshal at the siege of Carmarthen, he had previously fought alongside Llywelyn ap Iorwerth in 1218 and Gruffudd ap Llywelyn at Carmarthen Bridge in 1223.<sup>52</sup> More likely models for Dinefwr can be identified in the towers of the Brecon region, notably Bronllys, 1221 onwards, (Smith & Knight 1981, 22), and Tretower, 1230-40 (Radford, 1986, 2), both freestanding with prominent string-courses, lacking loopholes and lit by single-light windows.<sup>53</sup>

### **Discussion**

A scheme of descent can be advanced beginning with many towered Pembroke. Carmarthen and Ten-



*Fig 17. Castle mound at Nevern.*

by's diminutive towers can be related directly to its great tower, whilst characteristics of its outer court towers can be recognised at Cilgerran and Haverfordwest. Laugharne can be regarded as a copy of Cilgerran, albeit one having notable refinements, and may, in turn, have been copied or caricatured at Benton. Llawhaden and Llansteffan are of the same general lineage, whilst Manorbier favours Pembroke by way of Barnard's Tower. The Nevern tower may have been destroyed before the Marshal gained possession of Pembroke and those at Narberth and Cardigan are likely to post-date the death of his last surviving son.

Cathcart King attributed the whole of the Pembroke complex to the Marshal and whilst he overestimated the earl's tenure by a decade, he was surely correct in emphasising his great wealth.<sup>54</sup> This was the age of Château Gaillard, where the great castle and walled borough were built in just three years and it is possible that Pembroke's vast tower-studded fortress was planned, if not completed in the two decades of the Marshal's tenure.

A revised scheme was put forward by Neil Ludlow in which the Marshal was responsible only for the great tower, his sons completing the inner court defences whilst the outer court and borough walls were the work of the de Valence earls in the later thirteenth and early fourteenth century.<sup>55</sup> This scheme rests on the view that the outer court defences, notably the accomplished great gatehouse with its linking mural passages and D-plan barbican, are

too advanced for the Marshal period.<sup>56</sup> This hypothesis is, however, now open to further debate by the revised dating of Chepstow's equally accomplished outer gatehouse to the period following on from 1189.<sup>57</sup> In addition, it can be observed that Cilgerran features a comparable mural passage and that its East Tower and adjacent postern of 1223 match the pairing of Pembroke's Monkton Tower and Gate. In a similar vein, the barbican can be seen to belong to a group of D-plan forecourts found at both Pembroke and Tenby, seemingly modelled on the Marshal's Horseshoe Gate.<sup>58</sup> They differ significantly from suggested later thirteenth century exemplars at Goodrich and the Tower of London, in being attached to their gates and thus being situated within rather than beyond the main defensive ditch.<sup>59</sup>

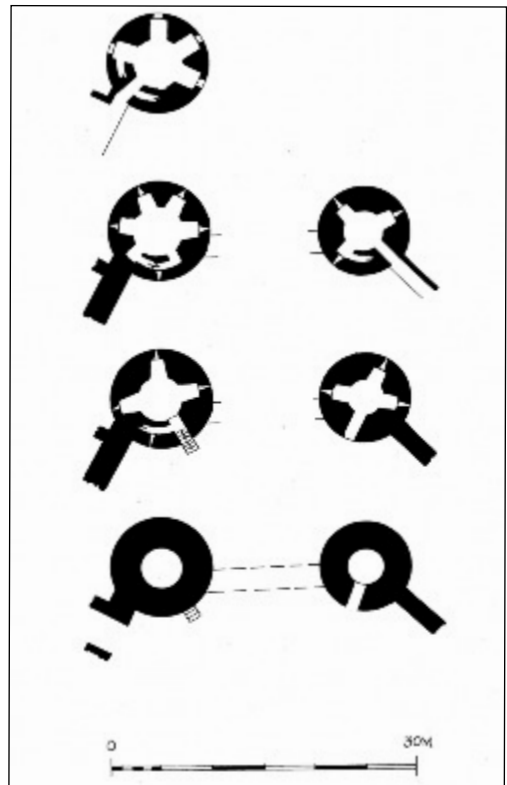
The position of the Tenby tower, standing at the centre of a large castle having a walled borough at its gate, recalls Pembroke,<sup>60</sup> the priory on nearby Caldey being a match for that at Monkton (fig. 23). The two places were set an easy day's ride apart, one that would have begun and ended in the common repeated modes of egress and access required by their D-plan forecourts. They also lay a single day's voyage from Ireland,<sup>61</sup> where the Marshal, having faced shipwreck on his first visit, raised the impressive two-stage Tower of Hook at the entrance to Waterford Bay.<sup>62</sup> The Pembroke and Tenby towers can be paired with the Tower of Hook as seamarks, if not lighthouses, marking either end of the fraught Irish Sea passage.<sup>63</sup>





*ABOVE: Fig 18. Laugharne Castle, towers from outer court. BELOW: Fig 19. Laugharne Castle, greater tower and gatehouse.*

*RIGHT: Fig 20. Laugharne Castle tower floor plans; speculative reconstruction, after plan in Avent, 1995. It is possible that the curtain above the gate was accessed from both of the greater towers' two upper floors, rather than the uppermost only, as is shown here.*





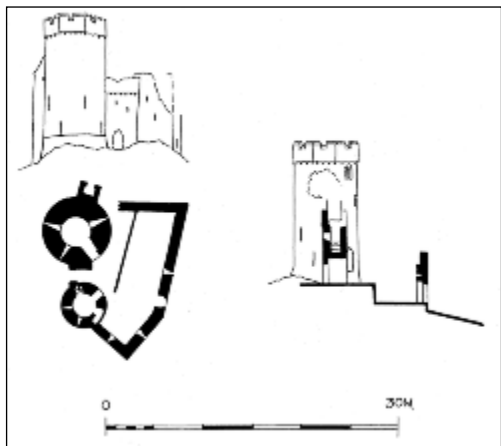


Fig 21. Benton Castle: plan, elevation and section, intended to show condition prior to restoration, after plans in Pembrokeshire Record Office PCC/PL/1/212, with additional details from plan supplied by M. Sullivan. See also King, 1981.

A light on Pembroke's upper stage would have guided vessels navigating its river and the cylindrical tower is balanced by the great square mass of the Marshal's hall block, rising from what King identified as a comital boathouse in the Wogan cavern<sup>64</sup> (fig 24). Similar concerns with movement can be inferred for the region's other castles, many of which were also built by lords with interests in Ireland. These castles are often situated on coasts, estuaries or

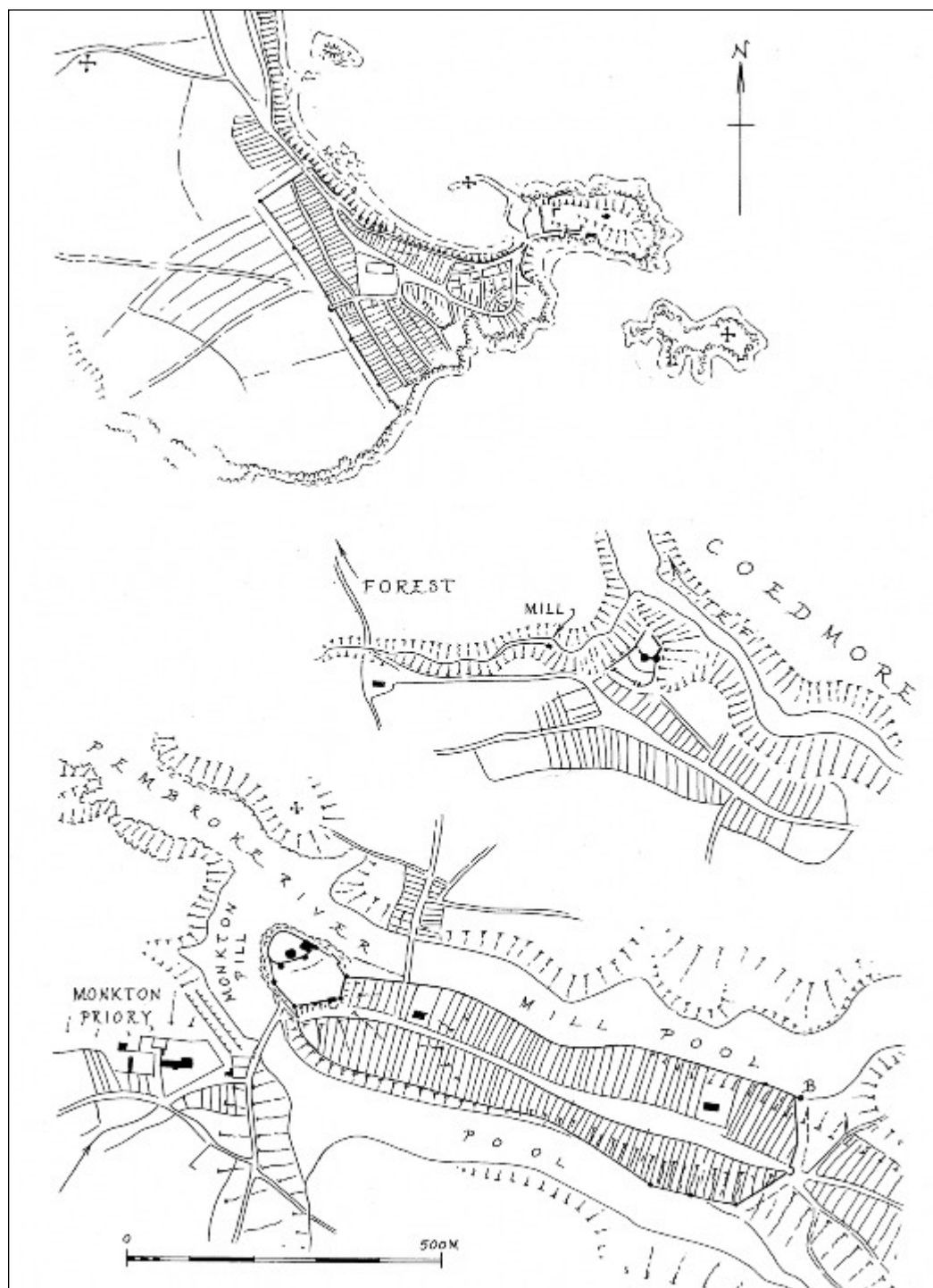
navigable rivers, notably on the manifold branches and creeks of the great Cleddau-Milford Haven waterway (fig 2). Coastal Manorbier is unusual in lacking a haven and the young Giraldus could only watch boats scudding by on their way to Ireland.<sup>65</sup>

It is possible that the Tenby tower's counterpart at Carmarthen was the work of William Marshal the younger following his recovery of the castle in 1223 (above). This action brought about a battle with Gruffudd, son of Llywelyn, that, as reported, has the air of a tournament *à outrance*, rather than a serious military engagement. 'And when the earl Marshal heard (news of the burning of Kidwelly) he went across the Tywi to Carmarthen Bridge. And Gruffudd received him and gave him a hard battle. And after fighting for the most part of the day ... each of the two hosts withdrew from the other to their tents'.<sup>66</sup>

The younger William's campaign culminated in the rebuilding of Cilgerran and it may be that emulation of this castle by other lords signalled their support for his chivalric prowess and wider policy, in particular his defiance of royal authority. This perceived support would be at odds with the earlier antagonism between the elder Marshal and those lords who numbered amongst the established Anglo Welsh of Ireland (Crouch, 2002, 104, 113). The later interruption in construction at Cilgerran and Haverfordwest could be attributed to Richard Marshal's war of 1233-34 and it is possible that in building his own towers this turbulent earl was signalling his support for William's policy, as well as rivalling his architectural achievements.

Fig 22. Manorbier Castle, Round Tower and Gatehouse from the outer court.





*Fig 23. Borough plans, from top: Tenby, Cilgerran; Pembroke (B – Barnard’s Tower).*



*Fig. 24. Pembroke Castle hall block, with gateway to the Wogan cavern below. Round tower to the rear*



*Fig. 25. Benton Castle, Milford Haven, engraving by J Fitler from a painting by Paul Sandby RA. (1779).*

The region's other cylindrical towers were mostly the work of independent lords, the de Chaworths at Kidwelly, the de Camvilles at Llansteffan and the bishops of St Davids at Llawhaden. The de Brians held both Laugharne and Walwyn's Castle, the latter answering to Pembroke. The diminutive Benton Castle lay within Walwyn's Castle, although its likely builders, the de la Roche's, held the contiguous lordship of Roch and Pill directly from the earls.<sup>67</sup> Whilst Laugharne's castle clearly resembles Cilgerran, its greater tower's pointed dome, curving wall stairs and intermediate entrance all proclaim it to have been no mere slavish imitation. Cylindrical towers at Llansteffan and Llawhaden can also be seen as tributes to Cilgerran, whilst Benton also appears to nod to Laugharne.

In its diminutive scale Benton Castle recalls the Tenby and Carmarthen towers and it cannot have offered the facilities of a Laugharne or a Cilgerran.<sup>68</sup> The evidence of mid-fourteenth century charter dating clauses points to the family's chief residence then being at Pill, where there is a likely enclosure castle as well as the Tironian Priory.<sup>69</sup> Alone of the castles examined here, Benton shows no trace of an earlier phase and alone of the Cleddau-Milford Haven castles it rises dramatically above the main waterway, as if to proclaim the arrival of the de la Roche's (fig 25). The family held other castles, taking their name from Roch in Pembrokeshire and lending it to Roche in Laugharne. Like Roch, Benton crowns an upburst of rock, an apt situation for a

de la Roche castle. Roche occupies a low, potentially watery site,<sup>70</sup> so that its name might be construed as a pun. Its location, half a mile from Laugharne, seems to underline the close feudal relationship between the de la Roches and the de Brians.

It has been noted that Manorbier's Round Tower appears to be modelled on Barnard's Tower at Pembroke. The de Barri's held Manorbier as a barony fee within the Pembroke Lordship and their emulation of a peripheral work could be a reflection of their subordinate status. In having its windows facing the field, as if presenting them as badges of identity, the Round Tower can be seen to mimic rather than to emulate other Marshal towers. Further elements of mimicry can be detected, both in Manorbier's large towered outer court, which is notably flimsy and thin-walled,<sup>71</sup> and in the pools flanking the castle,<sup>72</sup> and together these recall Pembroke's layout and peninsular location (fig 26).

Beginning with Pembroke's great tower, which can be regarded as the great tower of the earl's, all these towers can be seen to represent or symbolise their lords. Both of Cilgerran's towers can be regarded as singular and greater towers are readily apparent in the pairs at Laugharne and Benton. At Kidwelly the South-East Tower can be identified as the original 'Lord's Tower' (Kenyon 2002, 39, 41). A parallel might be drawn with Castle Hedingham, where the tower is thought to have been built to mark Aubrey de Vere's creation as earl of Oxford and, it is suggested, was intended to host the comital equivalents of crown



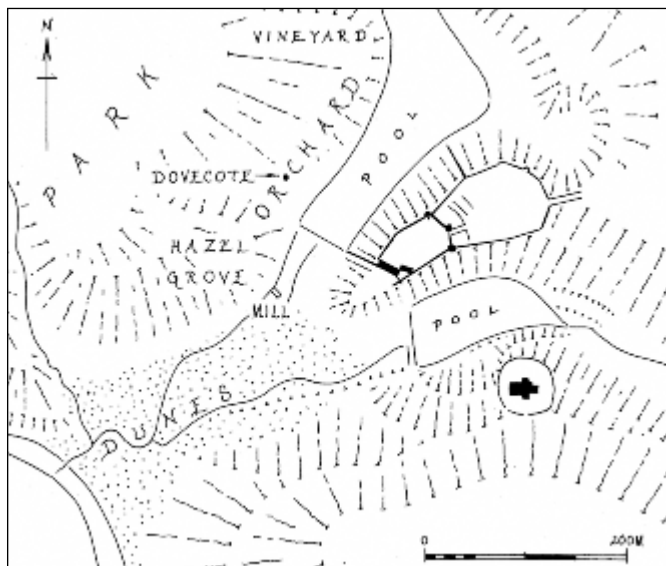


Fig. 26. Manorbier Castle and environs, showing features described by Gerald of Wales in the *Journey through Wales* I.12 (Thorpe 1978, 150).

wearing.<sup>73</sup> It may have been considered inappropriate for the Pembroke earls to build further great towers in the lordship. Although the diminutive examples at Tenby and Carmarthen reference the great tower's form, those at Cilgerran and Haverfordwest, being tied to their castle walls, recall rather Pembroke's outer defences. In a similar vein none of the neighbouring lords appear to have built freestanding great towers, choosing rather to emulate Cilgerran if not Barnard's Tower.

The self-contained Barnard's Tower has been characterised as, 'Pembroke Castle No. 2',<sup>74</sup> and might be identified as an alternative venue for the earl himself. Its well fitted-out principal floor bears comparison with the great tower's upper storey and indeed with that of Cilgerran's East Tower. All might be characterised as potential 'prospect chambers', their two-light windows, all fitted with seats, commanding notable views, respectively across Pembroke's Mill Pond, over Monkton Priory and park and across the Teifi gorge. A comparable apartment might be identified on the upper storey of Laugharne's greater tower, which is distinguished by its timber floor, fireplace and possible windows.

Pembroke's lesser towers could be identified as lodgings for vassals attending on the earls and as posts for their knights when performing castle guard. In this regard it may be significant that armo-

rial graffiti preserved in the Monkton Tower includes two shields labelled 'barry'.<sup>75</sup> This armorial tagging is reminiscent of the late-medieval illustration of Richmond in which banners indicate castle-guard stations (Goodall, 2011, fig. 47). Vassal lords such as the de Barris, as well as the de la Roches and the de Brians, could thereby be represented by cylindrical towers at Pembroke as well as those of their own castles.

The identification of individual towers with particular lords can be developed at Cilgerran. Whilst the castle's East Tower was begun by William Marshal the younger, the rather later West Tower is likely to have been the work of one of his brothers, arguably Richard (above). The duality manifest in these twin towers can also be recognised in the provision of two

outer court gateways. These align with the East Tower postern and the main inner gate, and opened, respectively, towards the adjoining borough market street and the church with the forest beyond (figs 3.2, 23). Such arrangements give the impression of superimposed castles, each representing different earls, coexisting on the same site; a less confrontational duality than that which can be discerned at Nevern.

Despite what might be considered an excessive display of symbolism Cilgerran was militarily sound, successfully defying a Welsh attack in 1258.<sup>76</sup> Indeed, the loopholes that pierce the Marshal towers and are so signally lacking in those of the Bronllys-Tretower affinity, betray a marshal attitude in keeping with the alarums and excursions of the times. For all this an element of playfulness can be discerned in diminutive castles or towers such as Benton, Carmarthen and Tenby, as well as in Manorbier's 'pasteboard' outer court. This is matched in the conduct of the earls. William the elder and Gilbert are noted as tourneyers, Gilbert fatally so, whilst the younger William was victor of the tournament-like battle at Carmarthen bridge. In emulating castles raised by such earls, other lords might be seen to have been supporting their wider cultural and political agenda. Their towers can thus be regarded as pinnacles of chivalry and bastions of baronial rights, whilst at the same time standing against the power of the Welsh princes.

## “Marshal towers” in South-West Wales: Innovation, Emulation and Mimicry

	Builders	Feudal superior	Date	Freestanding Y/N	1 <sup>st</sup> floor entrance Y/N	Two-light windows Y/N	Latrines Y/N	Vaults/ Dome	Batter/drum stringcourse Y/N	Stairs: spiral /curved
Nevern, Round Tower	Fitz Martin?	Crown	>1191? 1204-1215?	Y	?	?	?	?	?	?
Pembroke, Great Tower	William Marshal I	Crown	1200/01>	Y	Y	Y	N	Roof	N	Spiral
Pembroke, Barnard's Tower	William Marshal I?	Crown	1211>?	N	Y	Y	Y	Roof	N	Spiral
Cilgerran, East Tower	William Marshal II	Crown	1223	N	N	Y	N	-	N	Spiral
Cilgerran, West Tower	Richard Marshal?	Crown	1231-33?	N	Y	N	N	-	N	Spiral
Haverfordwest, North Tower	Richard Marshal?	Crown	1231-33?	N	?	?	?	-	N	Spiral
Laugharne, Greater Tower	De Brian	Crown/ Marshal De Brian/ Marshal	c. 1240>	N	Y	?	N	Ground, 1 <sup>st</sup> , roof	N	Curved
Benton, Greater Tower	De la Roche	Marshal	1230-50?	N	?	Y	?	-	N	?/-
Manorbier, Round Tower	De Barry	Marshal	1230s?	N	N	Y	N	Roof	N	Curved
Llawhaden, Round Tower	St Davids	Crown	1223-1257?	N	?	?	?	?	?	?
Llanstephan, Round Tower	De Camville	Crown	1223-1257?	N	?	?	Y	?	?	?
Narberth, Great Tower	Roger Mortimer?	Crown?	1247>?	?	Y	?	Y	?	Y	?
Cardigan, Great Tower	Marshal/Crown	-	1240-41 /1250>	?	?	?	?	?	?	?
Dynevor, Great Tower	Rhys Gryg	-	>1233	Y	Y	?	?	?	Y	?

### Conclusion

William Marshal's great tower at Pembroke Castle can be seen to have stood at the head of a diverse series of cylindrical towers built in south-west Wales in the first half of the thirteenth century. This descent is, however, irregular. Pembroke's great tower is essentially singular, being *the* great tower of the earls and of their lordship and county. Its cylindrical form was repeated in the numerous towers attached to Pembroke's castle and borough walls as well as in other towers raised by the Marshals. Of these Cilgerran is the most likely model for towers raised by other lords across the region. Considerable variation and innovation can be detected in this pattern of emulation, as well as significant elements of mimicry. These hint at underlying cultural and political influences that can now only be guessed at, but that were essential elements of the milieu from which these remarkable towers sprang.

### End Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Avent 2006, 89.
- <sup>2</sup> McNeill 2003, 96-8.
- <sup>3</sup> *Brut y Tywysogyon* (Jones 1955).
- <sup>4</sup> Walker 2002a, 30-42; Crouch, 2002,.
- <sup>5</sup> Walker 2002a, 32, 34-5;
- <sup>6</sup> *Brut y Tywysogyon* (Jones, 1955). The castles subjugated in 1215 included Narberth, Maenclochog; Kidwelly, Carmarthen, Llansteffan, Laugharne, St Clears, Newport, Cardigan and Cilgerran. In 1220 Llywelyn destroyed the castles of Narberth and Wis-

ton, before burning Haverfordwest, 'to the castle gate', and ravaging the territories around.

- <sup>7</sup> *Brut y Tywysogyon* (Jones 1955); Walker 2002a, 45-6.
- <sup>8</sup> Walker 2002b, 154.
- <sup>9</sup> Lewis 1913.
- <sup>10</sup> In 1231 Cardigan had been seized by Maelgwn, a grandson of Rhys ap Gruffudd, on the death of his father, also Maelgwn, who had sold it to the King in 1200. The younger Maelgwn first burnt the borough and slew all the burgesses, then returned to break down the bridge and finally came back with men from Gwynedd to force the castle's surrender 'with engines' (*Brut y Tywysogyon* (Jones 1955).
- <sup>11</sup> Walker 2002a, 70.
- <sup>12</sup> King 1978, 117-118, King & Cheshire 1982, 82-3.
- <sup>13</sup> Ludlow 1991, 27-29.
- <sup>14</sup> King 1978, 98-105; Renn, 1968.
- <sup>15</sup> McNeill 2003, 104-5.
- <sup>16</sup> King 1978, 36. These need not be original features.
- <sup>17</sup> King 1978, 105.
- <sup>18</sup> King 1978, 88-97.
- <sup>19</sup> The Town Tower and possibly the Henry VII Tower (King, 1978, 92, 93).
- <sup>20</sup> King & Cheshire 1982.
- <sup>21</sup> Thomas 1964; Salter 1996, 82-3; Davis 2000, 111, Walker, 1957, 92.
- <sup>22</sup> Photograph in National Monuments Record Wales (SN10SW).
- <sup>23</sup> Ludlow 2003, 148-9.

- <sup>24</sup> The bailiffs and burgesses had burned the borough for fear of Llywelyn in 1214 (Lewis 1913).
- <sup>25</sup> Note 3 (above). It may have been described as such in contrast to earlier work of clay-bonded stone at Cilgerran itself (Hilling, 2000, 12) as well as at nearby castles including Nevern (below, note 35) and Cardigan (Page, 2012).
- <sup>26</sup> Hilling 2000, 18-21.
- <sup>27</sup> Knight 2008, fig 6.6.
- <sup>28</sup> For which King 1978, 91.
- <sup>29</sup> Plan in Davis 2000, 80. The rectangular ‘keep’ need not be significantly earlier. Its bowed front recalls the ‘Platform’ at Pembroke (King 1978, 109-110) and its corner chimney that of Tenby’s castle gatehouse.
- <sup>30</sup> Given in King 1999, 38-40.
- <sup>31</sup> These are the 10-11m diameter Garrison and South Towers (Knight 2008, 60-64, 68).
- <sup>32</sup> King 1978, 100, 118; Hilling 2000, 20.
- <sup>33</sup> King 1978, 104, 118; King & Cheshire 1982, 82-3.
- <sup>34</sup> For which Renn 1961.
- <sup>35</sup> Caple, 2011, 327, 332.
- <sup>36</sup> Davis 2000, 100; Walker 2002b, 151-52. Newport is generally thought to have replaced Nevern as the caput of Cemais, however, the two castles, although barely 3.0km apart, each lay in different divisions of the lordship, respectively the comotes of Uwch and Is Nyfer. Newport borough may have founded as early as 1195 (Murphy 1994, 57-8).
- <sup>37</sup> Presumably in the period 1195-1215, if not from fitz Martin’s dispossession in 1191, when there indications that the lordship was shared between the Fitz Martins and the sons of Rhys ap Gruffudd (Murphy 1994, 58; Walker 2002b, 152).
- <sup>38</sup> Old Castle: SN03NE7; Newport Castle: Browne & Percival 1992.
- <sup>39</sup> Avent 1995, 9-10.
- <sup>40</sup> Avent 1991, 179-80; 1995, 34-6, 37-8.
- <sup>41</sup> In contrast to those lower in the tower, the arched recesses on the upper floor do not noticeably taper and no trace of slits can be observed below their present windows (restored in the 1930s).
- <sup>42</sup> Clark, 1865. Clark’s orientation is mistaken, his north being east.
- <sup>43</sup> Pers. comm. Mr M. Sullivan 03.04.2013. The upper floor level in this building could be seen prior to rebuilding (RCAHM&CW&M 1925, 33, fig 73).
- <sup>44</sup> Given that Clark made separate mention of the ‘upburst of trap’ immediately in front of it, this ‘small court or paddock’ may have occupied the level promontory to the east of the castle building (1865, 84). It had largely gone by 1920 (RCAHM&CW&M 1925, 33). The present owner recalls an earthwork on the site of the labyrinth below the castle, but describes it as a likely potato clamp.
- <sup>45</sup> Llawhaden: Turner 2000, 32, 41; Llansteffan: Avent 1991, 177.
- <sup>46</sup> The resulting effect continued by the gatehouse added later in the thirteenth century (see Avent 1991, 177).
- <sup>47</sup> King & Perks 1971, 106-7, figs 2, 5.
- <sup>48</sup> Davis 2000, 97.
- <sup>49</sup> It is depicted as such on John Speed’s county map of 1610. However, given this view’s known inaccuracies it is possible that this was the great D-shaped north tower, that recalls Martin’s Tower at Chepstow and the South Tower at Newport.
- <sup>50</sup> Murphy & O’Mahoney 1985, 191-2, 203. It is notable that the Castle’s most impressive surviving facade faces upstream towards Cilgerran.
- <sup>51</sup> Rees and Caple 1999, 11, 25-6. The same Rhys may also have been responsible for the slightly smaller tower, now reduced to a stump, at nearby Dryslwyn (Caple 2007, 27, 32).
- <sup>52</sup> *Brut y Tywysogyon* (Jones 1952; 1955).
- <sup>53</sup> Renn 1961.
- <sup>54</sup> King 1978, 117-118, King & Cheshire 1982, 82-3.
- <sup>55</sup> Ludlow 1991.
- <sup>56</sup> After Knight 1987.
- <sup>57</sup> Avent & Miles 2006, 53-4.
- <sup>58</sup> Tenby: Five Arches gate: Thomas 1994, 20, figs 8-10; castle barbican: Salter 1996, 82-3; Pembroke: borough gate: King & Cheshire 1982, 77; castle barbican: King 1978, 88; Horseshoe Gate: King 1978, 106-7.
- <sup>59</sup> The Horseshoe Gate was preferred as a model for the barbican by King (1977, 164-5). Thomas objected to this on the grounds that it was a tower rather than an open court (1994, 20).
- <sup>60</sup> Both boroughs were walled or otherwise enclosed by the earlier thirteenth century (Pembroke: King & Cheshire 1982, 82-3; Tenby: Thomas 1994, 8).
- <sup>61</sup> Gerald of Wales, *The Journey through Wales* 1.1 (Thorpe 1978, 168).
- <sup>62</sup> Avent 2006, 89; Colfer 2004, 84-91.
- <sup>63</sup> The Tenby tower is presently in the charge of the Harbour Master.
- <sup>64</sup> King 1978, 110-112.
- <sup>65</sup> *The Journey through Wales* 1.12 (Thorpe 1978, 150).
- <sup>66</sup> *Brut y Tywysogyon* (Jones 1952, 100).
- <sup>67</sup> Walker 2002b, 176-8. Thomas de Roch held a knight’s fee in Burton in 1307 (ibid, 181-2). The popular myth that the castle was built by Bishop Thomas Bec (1280-93) appears to be without foundation.



- <sup>68</sup> However, a the ruins of a second building appear in a John Warwick Smith watercolour, *The ruins of Benton Castle on Milford Haven as seen on the near approach to them coming down the Haven from Rose Castle towards Lawrenny* (1784-1806) (National Library Wales). For a good plan of Benton see King, D. J. C., 1981.
- <sup>69</sup> Hunter & Traherne 1852; Ludlow 2002, 45. Castle Pill: SM90NW9. The priory was founded by Adam de la Roche before 1200.
- <sup>70</sup> Butler 1962.
- <sup>71</sup> King & Perks 1971, 111-113.
- <sup>72</sup> The north valley fish pond also fed a mill. The stub of a pond bay dam can be observed across the southern stream from the car park, below the church.
- <sup>73</sup> Dixon & Marshall 1993, 22.
- <sup>74</sup> King & Cheshire 1982, 83.
- <sup>75</sup> King 1978, 95-6.
- <sup>76</sup> As did Kidwelly, Laugharne and Llansteffan had both succumbed the previous year (*Brut y Tywysogyon* (Jones 1952; 1955).

#### Abbreviations

RCAHM & CW&M - Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historic Monuments and Constructions in Wales and Monmouthshire

RCAHMW – Royal Commission for Ancient and Historic Monuments Wales

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