

*Naws am Le
Sense of Place*

PEMBROKE

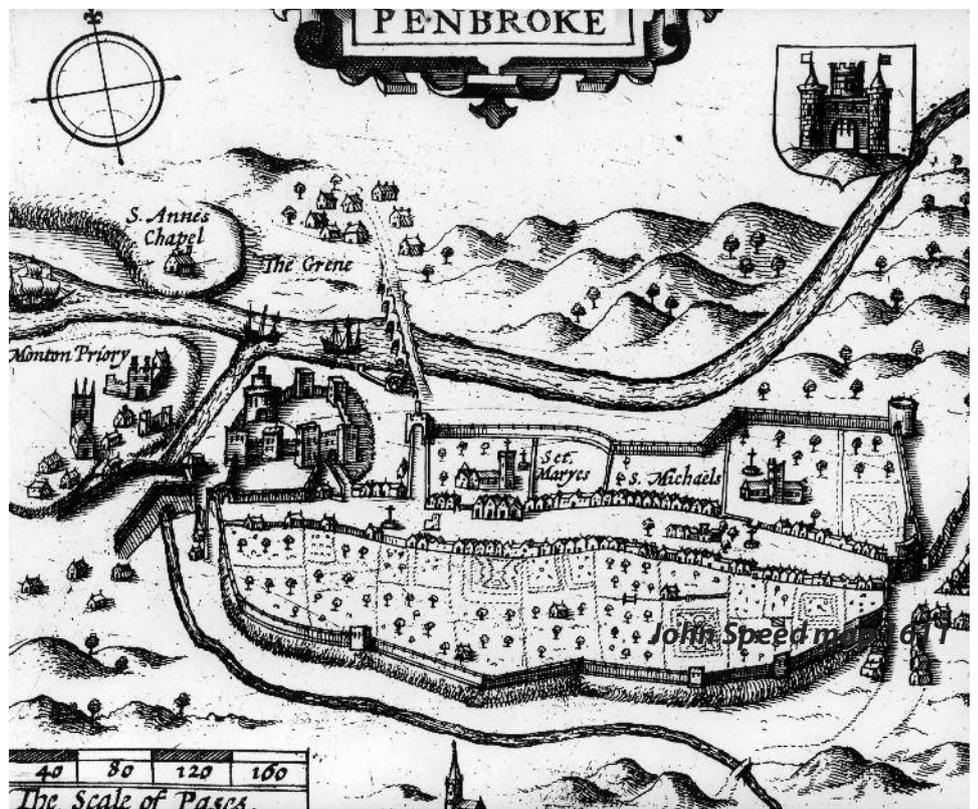


Name

Located at the head of the Pembroke River, on a narrow limestone ridge, Pembroke occupies a commanding position. Pembroke, Penfro in Welsh, was almost certainly well known to the Normans as the head or principal place (pen) of the region (bro).

Beginnings

Recorded history began with the Normans but Pembroke's origins can be traced back 10,000 years to the Mesolithic hunter gatherers who occupied Wogan's Cavern situated beneath the Castle. The existing castle would almost certainly have been the site of a fortified settlement during the Iron Age. When the Dark Ages descended over Britain following the collapse of Roman rule, Celtic saints established Christian sites at St Daniel's and Monkton.



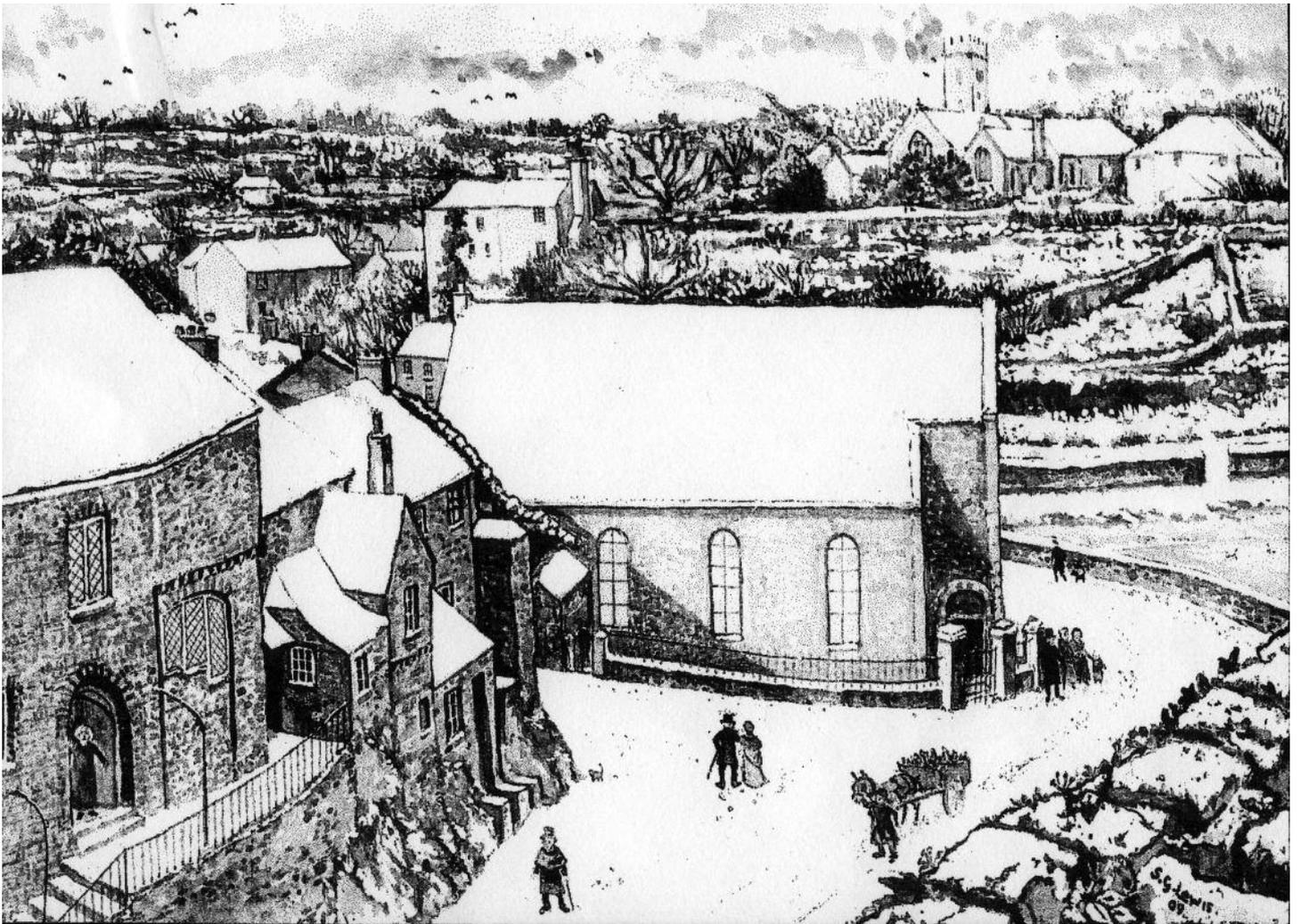
Pembroke Castle

In 1093 a force of Normans under Arnulf de Montgomery overcame local resistance and built a wooden fortification where the present stone castle now stands. Its strategically advantageous location enabled the Normans to hold firm against Welsh retaliation and Pembroke Castle, under the command of Gerald de



Windsor, became a Norman powerbase from which the invaders were to extend their influence over the whole of South Pembrokeshire. Gerald also won the hand in marriage of the legendary Welsh Princess Nest 'the Helen of Wales'. To defend this newly gained territory, Henry I established a colony of English and Flemish settlers to displace the native Welsh. Hence the name "Little England beyond Wales".

Wogan's Cavern later used by the Normans as a boathouse and store



Westgate Mediaeval Cottages and Chapel

Mediaeval Borough

Pembroke is still recognisable as a fortified Mediaeval town with its one long street flanked by buildings constructed in burgage plots and encircled by town walls. The threat of attack was never far away but Pembroke prospered under the strong rule of the Earls of Pembroke. Some of these Earls are prominent names in our national history; the greatest of all was William Marshall who was largely responsible for rebuilding the Castle in stone with its distinctive donjon. The town walls are in poor condition. The best sections can be seen along the Commons where there are two mediaeval towers, one capped by a 19th century gazebo. Farther away at the western end of the Millpond is Barnard's Tower, the largest of the defending towers which once accommodated a permanent garrison. There were three town gates at East End, Westgate and Northgate but none survive. However, it is still possible to see the springing of the arch of the West Gate alongside the row of mediaeval cottages, which are the oldest domestic buildings in the town.

Prosperous Port

Granted a charter of privileges by Henry I and Henry II, Pembroke gained the monopoly of sea trading, making it the centre of trade for the whole of the Milford Haven Waterway. All merchant ships were required to report to the bridge at Pembroke to buy and sell goods, or pay customs duty at the cross which stood near the Lion Hotel in the Main Street. But the boom years were to come to an end. Not only did Pembroke lose its trading monopoly but was devastated by the Black Death in 1349.

**Pembroke
Town Crest**



Tudor Decline

Pembroke Castle was the birthplace of the Tudor dynasty and, in the Tower where Henry VII is reputed to have been born, a tableau commemorates the event. He spent his early years here, educated by the monks in Monkton Priory. The Tudor years were not prosperous ones for Pembroke. Leland in his *Tour through Wales* of 1538 describes the East End of the town as "now totally in ruin". Henry VIII, who inherited the Earldom and made Anne Boleyn Marchioness, dealt Pembroke further misfortune. The Act of Union in 1536 took away Pembroke's privileges gained under its previous charters. Henceforth the County of Pembroke was created and Haverfordwest replaced Pembroke as the administrative centre.

Civil War

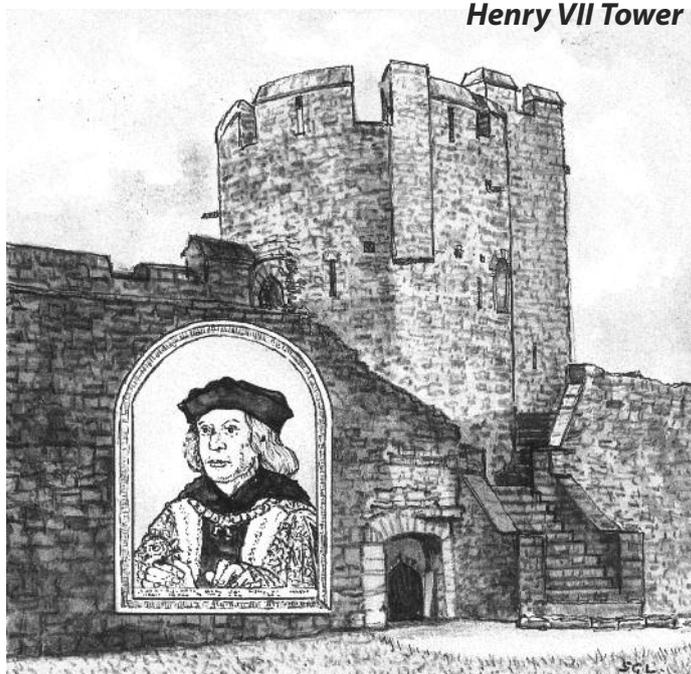
Pembroke Castle was to play one last leading role in British history during the Civil War 1642 - 1648. John Poyer, Mayor of Pembroke, declared for Parliament but following the first Civil War, which ended in 1645, he and his supporters were treated badly. Eventually, in 1648, Poyer made the decision to declare for the king and Pembroke became the springboard for a new rebellion which spread throughout Britain. Cromwell himself took charge, besieging Pembroke for nearly two months. Heavy artillery caused great damage to the town which eventually capitulated. After the siege Cromwell was reputed to have stayed at the York Tavern from where he ordered the Castle to be slighted and a once proud fortress was left to fall into decay.

The Chain Back previously known as Orielton Terrace



Street, there are several good examples of Georgian town houses particularly on the South side: many were rebuilt on mediaeval sites and still incorporate the earlier fabric including undercrofts.

Henry VII Tower



Eighteenth Century Prosperity

The 18th century saw a revival in Pembroke's fortunes so much so that when Daniel Defoe visited Pembroke in 1724 he wrote "Here is the richest and ... most flourishing town of all South Wales". Pembroke was now the major port on Milford Haven and trade was booming.

It benefitted also from the influence of the great country estates, particularly the Owens of Orielton who owned most of Pembroke and held the borough as their seat in Parliament. Orielton House on The Chain Back is thought to have been the town house of the Owens'.

Of the houses in the Main

Nineteenth Century Development

The nineteenth century saw a downturn in Pembroke's importance as a port losing out to the towns of Milford and Haverfordwest.

However, the building of the Royal Dockyard a short distance away gave Pembroke a boost. Many found employment in the new shipbuilding industry in the Dockyard. Pembroke itself grew alongside the building of the new town of Pembroke Dock with suburbs at Orange Gardens and Monkton. Both towns were combined into one borough. Increased prosperity and advances in engineering led to a water supply for Pembroke and a Gasworks. An industrial estate developed on the Commons with a Gasworks, Limekiln, Slaughter House (now the Library and Tourist Information Centre), Tannery (Youth Club), Smithy and Iron Foundry (Community Centre); a toxic mix of smell and pollution.

Main Street Improvements

A town clock was another advance of the age and the clock tower with its two naked cupid statuettes is one of Pembroke's iconic buildings. It was said that there were four but the two facing St Mary's Church were removed as deemed offensive to Victorian sensibilities.

At this time Pembroke possessed grand Assembly Rooms in the nearby building which is now Paddles (formerly Haggard's Cinema). Opposite stands the Town Hall, built in 1820, which houses a series of Murals depicting the history of Pembroke. Next door is the Old Kings Arms and a short distance away the Lion Hotel, both fine examples of former Coaching Inns. Pembroke has a legacy of eighteenth and nineteenth century buildings. A walk following the Pembroke Civic Trust's Town Trail will give far more information than is possible here.



Pembroke Main Street looking west

Religion

Pembroke has fine Mediaeval Churches in St Mary's and St Michael's situated within the town walls and Monkton Priory Church and St Daniel's outside. All Churches were renovated in the late nineteenth century. This was a time of religious fervour, which saw the building of four grand chapels in the Main Street. There was much rivalry between denominations, each trying to outdo the other with their grandiose styles; Calvinists at Westgate, Congregationalists at the Tabernacle, Baptists at Mount Pleasant and the Wesleyans at the East End. John Wesley himself visited Pembroke several times between 1739 -90 and his followers built a Meeting House here. Nearby was a preaching cross from which is derived the name of the pub The Old Cross Saws.

Pembroke Michaelmas Fair



Agriculture and Fairs

Pembroke was an important agricultural centre and market town: the right to hold markets and fairs was embodied in its Royal Charters dating back to the Middle Ages. Although Pembroke's days as a market town have passed, those rights still survive in the Michaelmas Fair held in the Main Street every October. Now a pleasure fair, its origins lie in agriculture and trade. It was the annual hiring fair where bargains were struck

with the local farmers for a year's work and attracted farm workers from all over South Pembrokeshire. It also attracted traders and entertainers, Haggar's bioscope being a main attraction. William Haggar was one of the pioneers of the cinema; the demise of Haggar's cinema in Pembroke is much regretted.

Coastal Trade

From the beginning, the sea was Pembroke's life blood. It grew prosperous through its sea trade but this was to decline in the nineteenth century. The Pembroke River was not easily navigable and when the Pembroke and Tenby Railway opened in 1864 trains provided a far easier way of transporting raw materials. However, the coastal trade continued and sailing ships could be seen trading at the Pembroke Quays well into the 20th century. The last to do so was the 'Kathleen and May' in 1960. There is little reminder of these once bustling quays. Only the Royal George Inn and the boathouse remain of the buildings on the South Quay. The Mill Bridge was a former tidal barrage which was built in the Middle Ages to power the town's corn mill, originally granted to the Knights Templar in 1199.

A large 5 storey Victorian mill later stood here but was burnt down in 1956. The renovated Corn Store is the sole survivor of the buildings of the North Quay, now surrounded by modern flats.

A barrage was built in the 1970s to dam the Castle Pond - this means that boats are now a rare sight at the South Quay.

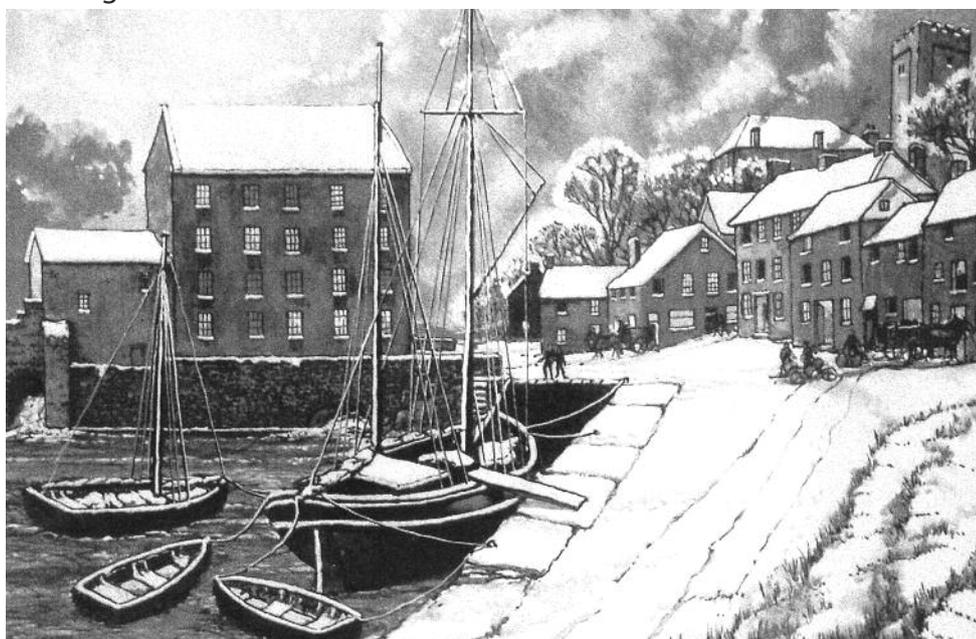
Pembroke Millponds

Pembroke abounds in natural history too. From the South Quay take a walk along the Main Millpond to see large numbers of swans, wildfowl, waders and seabirds.

Bats fly here at dusk and otters are a rare sight. Before WW2

the Green on the North shore was green fields, but now housing estates cover the whole area. Of historic interest is 'Riverside', formerly the Pembroke Union Workhouse, and Golden Farm, where once Golden Prison stood. The romantic tale of the escape of prisoners from the 1797 French invasion aided by local girls is part of Pembroke legend. The walk takes you along the south side of the town walls ending at Barnard's Tower and the Railway embankment beyond which is the now inaccessible Upper Pond.

The South Quay as it used to be with Mill





Old North Gate

Tourist Town

In 1972 Pembroke was designated a Conservation Area in recognition of its national historic importance and architectural merit. Now, Pembroke relies largely on tourism, with its castle being one of the finest in the country. At one time painters like Turner and Sandby came here to paint the picturesque ruins and surroundings. Since then the Castle has largely been restored thanks to the antiquarian J R Cobb and Sir Ivor Philips. Now managed by a Trust, it is Pembroke's great asset, a leading tourist destination and venue for events.

The Pembroke and Monkton Local History Society have also produced a complementary leaflet on Monkton. To find out more, visit the Society's website www.pembrokeandmonktonhistory.org.uk

THE COUNTRYSIDE CODE

Respect - Protect - Enjoy

- Be safe - plan ahead and follow any signs
- Leave gates and property as you find them
- Protect plants and animals, and take your litter home
- Keep dogs under close control
- Consider other people



Pembroke & Monkton Local History Society

www.pembrokeandmonktonhistory.org.uk

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