

Lords of Pembrokeshire: an account up to the Tudors.

From 'The Description of Pembrokeshire'

By George Owen (1602-3)

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Editorial Introduction

Those wishing to profit, agriculturally or ecologically, from Skomer have to interact with its rabbit-dominated base-line. This brings them into continuity with the social world of adventurers and entrepreneurs who developed the Norman colony which became known as Pembrokeshire.

The first records of the island date from the 14th century. They are accounts of the Lordship of Haverford West, when the annual production of rabbit fur was a major source of its wealth. The rabbit is not indigenous to Britain and is first recorded as a product of the warrens which were imported with the Norman manorial system. There is no Welsh word for rabbit, although the hare is described as 'the long-eared one'.

The following extracts from George Owen's work set the historical scene as it appeared to him as a local antiquary and landowner of North Pembrokeshire living in the sixteenth century.

His description covers a wide range of topics such as topography, geology, agriculture, genealogy and the origins of [divisions between communities](#).

As a survey of the county it was typical of others initiated in other parts of Britain at that time which had the aim of increasing local agricultural and mineral productions. In this context, his [description](#) of the Pembrokeshire Islands are presented in the context of potential agricultural assets.

The Earldom of Pembroke

They also write that Gilbert Strongbow, whom I take for the first Earl of Pembroke, was sister son to Walter fitz Richard, as though the said Earl Strongbow should claim the earldom by inheritance from the said Walter. Our histories declare plainly that King Henry I gave Gilbert Strongbow all the lands of Cadwgan ap Bleddyn, and he came to Cardiganshire and built two castles there which Roger de Montgomery had built before, but whether the said Gilbert Strongbow had the earldom of Pembroke by inheritance from the said Walter, or by the king's gift, certain it is that he was earl there and that it continued in his issue until Richard II's times. The said Gilbert Strongbow, before he had the earldom of Pembroke, was earl of Striguil, or Chepstow, for so shall you hear him named in divers histories which, although the name vanished in time, and Pembroke only remained, yet did the same inheritance of Strigoil and Chepstow continue for many years in his issue, as shall be declared hereafter.

11th-12th Centuries

Arnulph Montgomery

Also, the most probable authors that write touching these matters affirm that William Rufus, in his time, gave the county of Dyfed (for so is Pembrokeshire called in ancient histories) to Arnulph Montgomery, second son to Roger Montgomery, the first Earl of Shrewsbury and Arundel, and that he came to this county with a power of Normans and Saxons, subdued it and planted himself and his people about the place where the town of Pembroke now stands, and having obtained his desired purpose of the same (as it seems), returned again to England, placing and leaving behind him one Gerald fitz Windsor, a worthy captain, as his steward, and to govern his people and garrisons, which he had left there behind him to keep the county in subjection.

This Arnulph, before his departure, began to build the castle of Pembroke but, as some writers declare and as it is most likely, it was but of turf and timber, in manner of a sconce or fort, but at the last this

Arnulph and his brother Roger did rebel against King Henry I and in the end were both banished and all their lands confiscated to the king who then gave Dyfed, or Pembrokeshire, to a knight called Saer who, as it may be gathered by the histories, enjoyed it not much above a year but the same was bestowed upon the said Gerald of Windsor, who had been steward there to Arnulph Montgomery before.

Gerald of Windsor

This Gerald had then married Nest, the daughter of Rhys ap Tewdwr, being a goodly and beautiful lady, one whom, a little before, the said King Henry had begotten a son called Robert, who was after Earl of Gloucester and Bristol. This Gerald enjoyed the county for many years and had great wars with the princes of Wales. It seems that he rather governed the same as steward to King Henry than as earl or lord or by any right of his own, for I can read of no gift that the king made unto him thereof, and therefore in this catalogue of the Earls of Pembroke I omit this Gerald and all those that were before him, although I find some of them named earls of some authors but not so authentically that I dare affirm them to be earls and therefore, omitting those, I begin with Gilbert Strongbow who was the first undoubted earl there.

The Flemings

I read also that about 1104 or 1105 a great part of the Low Countries, in Flanders, was suddenly overflowed by the sea and never afterwards recovered, whereby the inhabitants of that place were sent by the Earl of Flanders to his cousin King Henry to seek habitations, for that diverse parts of England lay waste and wanted people by reason that most Saxons were destroyed by the Normans about the Conquest time, whereupon King Henry I placed them, with their wives and children, in Cumberland near Carlisle, as

Mr. Camden notes, where they continued for a space. But afterwards King Henry wanting people to supply his garrisons which he was forced to keep in Wales, for that the people and princes of Wales made great destructions of his people there daily, he thought better to send those Flemings thither to get their livings by continual fighting with the Welshmen than to spend his own men in that service. Wherefore the said Flemings were sent thither to Gerald, steward of Pembroke, who gave them habitations and dwellings in Roose and about Pembroke and Tenby and other places in the country adjoining, who were for the safeguard of themselves forced to begin to build the towns of Tenby, Pembroke and Haverfordwest, and to keep themselves within garrisons for many years, enduring continual wars with the Welshmen. The said Gerald built again and re-edified the castle of Pembroke, which Arnulph de Montgomery began at a place called Congarth Fychan, which I think if those Flemings and Saxons could have pronounced or written the same truly, should rather be Y Gongl Fechan, and this appears manifest by the situation of the said town of Pembroke which stands in a little nook of land stretching itself into Milford Haven. It seems that this Gerald did not bestow any great charge in strengthening and fortifying the said castle in his time, neither may we judge that the castle and town of Pembroke were anything near in force and strength as since we see it has been made by the earls that succeeded, for we read that Owen ap Cadwgan, being in love with the said Gerald's wife, being his near cousin, came suddenly in the night from his father's house with a few company, entered the castle, and Gerald conveying himself away through a privy, Owen ap Cadwgan took his wife and children and led them captive to Powys.

After this Gerald, or rather in his time, King Henry I, gave or invested Gilbert Strongbow in possession of the said earldom of Pembroke, as before is touched, which Gilbert was first undoubted earl thereof, whereof we have any certain ground and warrant, and therefore I place him first Earl of Pembroke in this catalogue.

Gilbert Strongbow

Gilbert Strongbow, the first undoubted Earl of Pembroke, was a valiant and a noble captain and at such time as King Henry I in person led a huge army against all Wales and dividing his forces into three parts, this Gilbert had the leading of one third part thereof against South Wales, wherein was the whole strength of the fourth part of all England and Cornwall. This was about the year of our Lord 1113. I find also that Henry II at such time as he banished such Flemings as King Stephen had brought into England, that he sent some of them to their cousins in Pembrokeshire, by which it appears that Pembrokeshire has been inhabited by Normans, Flemings and Englishmen being sent thither at sundry times for supplies of the garrisons which were maintained there against the Welshmen for many years. But whereas some write that the Flemings are yet there and to be known and differing from others by their speech and manners, therein they are mistaken. For if the Flemings were placed there, as we must think and credit the histories, yet certain it is that there is now no sign thereof, but both the Flemish and French speech altogether worn away and only English, such as is spoken in other

parts of England, is commonly used there, and none other language. But it seems that most of the gentlemen of account that came thither with the conquerors thereof were Normans and Frenchmen, which may well be perceived by their names, which I have collected together of late for that purpose.

This Earl Gilbert, after he had been Earl of Pembroke thirty-two years, died in the year 1141 leaving him a son, called Richard, and a daughter, called Basill.

Wars with the Welsh

Richard, the son and heir of Earl Gilbert, succeeded his father and was Earl of Pembroke. There were great wars between him and the sons of Gruffudd ap Rhys ap Tewdwr, and many skirmishes made, among which the Welshmen, one night coming secretly along the sands between Amroth and Tenby, were not descried until they had privily entered the castle of Tenby, slew all the people they found there and so departed without hurt, but Earl Richard shortly repaired it again. In his youth he gave himself to great riot and consumed the most part of his livings, and after departed and dwelt about Chepstow, but afterwards he was made captain of the Welshmen, or inhabitants of South Wales, which went into Ireland, where he married Eva, daughter and heir of the King of Leinster, and so enjoying that part of Ireland by her. He conquered a great part of all the residue, all which afterwards he yielded and gave to King Henry II who, in lieu thereof, made him Earl Marshal of Ireland and gave him great possession there, as Wexford, Kildare and Ossory, appointing him his Lieutenant in Ireland where, at length, being hurt in a skirmish, he died of a wound in the year 1176, leaving behind him but one daughter which he had by his second wife, Eva, daughter of the King of Leinster as aforesaid, who enjoyed all his great possessions. He was also Earl of Striguil, a castle in Monmouthshire, and also of Chepstow, which names of Striguil and Chepstow were in process of time forgotten, but the possessions thereof, with the names only of Earls of Pembroke remained, as before partly is declared.

Isabel, the only daughter and heir of Richard Strongbow, Earl of Pembroke, and Eva, his second wife, after the decease of her father, enjoyed his lands and was governed by tutors, being an infant, by reason whereof the garrisons in Pembrokeshire being but slenderly looked to, and the chief strength of that town, being warlike fellows, sent into other places of service, which being perceived by the Welshmen, they, under the leading of Maelgwn and Hywel, sons of Prince Rhys, came with all their forces to Tenby, which they won by plain force, and for that it then was the chief receptacle of all the English forces and a place by natural situation very strong. They slew all the inhabitants and burnt the town to ashes, and so departed. For this her tutors were greatly blamed, and complaint made to the King who, to redress the same, gave her presently and in marriage to William de la Grace, otherwise called William Marshal, a wise and a valiant nobleman, creating him also Earl of Pembroke and Earl Marshal of England. He repaired the castle of Tenby shortly after, but the town lay desolate long after. This William de la Grace in

his time became the Lord Protector both of the King and all his dominions, and was the chief stay of all the English nation, and finally he died in 1219, in the third year of King Henry III, after he had been earl thirty years, and lies buried in the Inner Temple at London. He had, by his wife, five sons, all earls of Pembroke, one after another, and died without issue. He had also five daughters, amongst whom his great inheritance was divided. He and his children were all called Marshals after the office they enjoyed, which was Earl Marshal, and in him first began the name of Marshal.

13th Century

The Earl Marshals

This William Marshal proved to be the most noble and politic governor, a great and wise counsellor in the state. He was the chiefest procurer of the peace between the king and the barons, and persuaded the king to grant the charter of the liberties of England, commonly called Magna Carta, in the original record of which charter the said William Marshal is named the chiefest man that procured the same, in which charter the king called him ruler of the king and his realm.

This William, at the coronation of King Richard I, did bear before him the regal sceptre which, as I judge, he did bear by his office of Earl Marshal of England, which Earl Marshalship departed from the earldom of Pembroke to the Bigods with the second daughter of William, Earl Marshal, and afterwards the Earls of Pembroke and their issue at the coronations bore only a sword. Upon the death of this William, Earl Marshal, was compiled this epitaph:

I am the one whom Hibernia felt to be its Saturn, Anglia the Sun, Normandy Mercury, Gaul Mars.

William le Grace, the second Earl Marshal of England in 1219 enjoyed his father's possessions. He had great wars in Ireland for the keeping of his lands there and likewise with Llywelyn, prince of North Wales, whom he overthrew in divers great battles, and in one battle against the said Llywelyn in 1223 he took prisoner and killed 9,000 Welshmen. Some write that he built the castle of Cilgerran. He married Elen one of the daughters of King John and having been earl twelve years, he died and is buried by his father in the Inner Temple church. He had no issue of his body living at the time of his decease in 1230.

Richard the brother of the last Earl William, became earl next after him in 1231. He was sent by King Henry III with a great power to war in France but after returning to England there fell some variance between the king and other the nobility so that Earl Richard, taking part against the king, joined himself with other lords in the Barons' Wars, and chiefly with Llywelyn, Prince of Wales. and Simon Montfort Earl of Leicester. The king, therefore wrote to Ireland to the lords there to seize into their hands all his lands there, which when they went about to invade, he hastened over thither, where enterprising with a small army to fight with Maurice Fitzgerald he was by his own people betrayed and left desolate in the field where, after he was wounded, he was taken prisoner near Kildare and carried to the castle of Kilkenny where within sixteen days after he died, after he had been earl three years. He lies buried in the church of Kilkenny, then belonging to the friars preachers. When news of his death came to England the king greatly repented his dealings alleging that he had lost by folly the noblest captain in the world.

Gilbert, the brother of Earl Richard, was by the king restored to all his brother's lands and honours, and at Whitsuntide in 1234 the king made him knight and delivered him the rod of Earl Marshal's office, as his ancestors before him had. He was in great favour with the king near five years but then by means of some that envied his estate, he fell into the king's displeasure so that he forsook the Court and, maintaining himself upon his own livings very nobly, came at last to the castle of Hereford where, at a tourney which he there held, he was overthrown from his horse and so bruised that shortly after he died of the hurt in 1241, after he had been earl seven years. He married Margaret, daughter to Alexander, King of the Scots, by whom he had issue a son, who died before his father. This Earl Gilbert gave certain lands to the Maudlins of Tenby towards the relief of the lepers there, which land after being converted to other uses is now of Her Majesty's possessions.

Walter, the brother of Earl Gilbert and his next heir, enjoyed all his possessions and was Earl Marshal of England and, visiting his county of Pembroke, took order for the repairing of Tenby which, as yet, lay so desolate, where also he appointed to build an almshouse for poor people there, and to next build the church. But before anything was perfected, after he had been earl about five years, he died the fourth day of December 1245, leaving no issue of his body, and lies buried in the abbey of Tintern.

Anselm, his brother, in 1245 aforesaid, obtained the title of Earl Marshal, Earl of Pembroke and lord of Wexford, but he enjoyed it scarce one month and then died the 22nd of December in the year aforesaid.

The Munchensys

After the death of Anselm, Warren de Munchensy who had married the eldest, but some say the second, daughter of William Marshal and Isabel Strongbow, in her right obtained the earldom of Pembroke and lordship of Wexford, but the office of Earl Marshal was by the king given to Hugh Bigod, who had married Maud, the second, or as some think the eldest, daughter of William Marshal. This Warren de Munchensy coming into Pembrokeshire with his wife, Joan, repaired divers ruinous places and caused the church of Tenby to be perfected which, from the time of the burning of the town till then, was not restored. He also bestowed great store of plate and jewels upon the said church which they had enjoyed long after. But this Joan his wife dying, shortly after, he married his second wife, and had issue by both of them, and in 1255 he died. He had issue by his first wife, only two children then living: Joan, his daughter, married to William de Valence, and William, who was then under age, enjoyed the title of all his father's honours. He had by his second wife also divers children. He died very rich: his goods, as by his testament appeared, amounted to above 200,000 marks.

After the decease of Warren de Munchensy, William, his son by his wife Joan, succeeded and was Earl of Pembroke and lord of Wexford and Munchensy: being then under age, the king gave the wardship of him to his brother-in-law, William de Valence. But within one month after he came to full age and was newly entered in his father's possessions, he died without issue.

His sister Joan, being of the whole blood, enjoyed all his possessions. He died in 1257 enjoying his titles but two years.

The Munchensys

William de Valence, who was brother to King Henry III by the mother, being long before married to Joan, sister of William de Munchensy, became inheritor of the said Munchensy's honours so that he, in the right of his wife, was Earl of Pembroke, lord of Wexford and Munchensy. He had also many other honours that his brother, King Henry, had bestowed upon him.

This William de Valence, and Joan his wife, gave the townsmen of Tenby the first charter of liberties they enjoyed, after the burning of the said town, and licensed them to choose yearly among themselves two portreeves for their government. He also granted to the burgesses free common yearly upon all his grounds and meadows from the time of mowing the corn and hay there growing until the Feast of the Purification of Mary yearly, which until this day the burgesses enjoy and, as the report goes, he gave the glebe, which until now is pertaining to the parsonage, out of his lands there. And I have seen an inquisition taken in the time of King Henry IV that this William de Valence and Joan, his wife, built the hospital of St. John near Tenby, and gave much more land to the same than now it has. It is now parcel of the Queen's Majesty's possessions by suppression of the religious houses and was founded to keep both laymen and clerks. Before this time, in the time of the former earls of Pembroke, there had been great quarrels and troubles between the said earls and the ancient lords of Cemais touching the privileges and jurisdictions belonging to the lordships of Pembroke and Cemais which, in the time of the said William de Valence, was ended as appears by divers records, especially by a composition which passed between the said William de Valence, then Earl of Pembroke, and the Lord William Martin, then lord of Cemais, in the presence of divers lords and nobility of this realm, dated at Kings Clipston in 1290, which composition was not long observed but grew to be the cause of greater outrage as shall be declared hereafter. This William de Valence died after he had been earl thirty-nine years but his wife, over-living him, was Countess of Pembroke and did all in her own name until the year 1305 after she had ruled alone nine years. She had by her husband divers children.

14th Century

Aymer de Valence

After the decease of Joan, the wife of William de Valence, her eldest son, Aymer de Valence, was Earl of Pembroke, lord of Wexford and Munchensy. He was a noble lord in his time and after King Edward I had conquered Scotland, this Aymer de Valence was made Lord Warden and Governor of the said realm under him. Afterwards he was the king's ambassador in France. He died there in the year 1323. He married Marie, daughter of Guy, Earl of St. Paul, but had no issue, so that the chiefest part of his great possessions fell to Lawrence Hastings, who was descended of his sister, Isabel de Valence, and the residue fell to Richard, Lord Talbot, and David Strabolgi, as descended of his other sister, Jane, who married John, Lord Redcomyn...

The Hastings

Lawrence Hastings, the son of John Hastings, whose mother was Isabel, the eldest sister of Aymer de Valence, as next heir to the said Aymer obtained the earldom of Pembroke and lordship of Wexford. He was at that time very young and the King gave his wardship to Lady Isabel de Burgh, lady of Clare, so

; that during his minority she was custos of the earldom of Pembroke. He confirmed the charter and liberties of Tenby, with a new augmentation. He married Agnes, daughter of Roger Mortimer, lord of Wigmore and, within three years after, he died leaving one son scarce two years old at the time of his decease. He was earl twenty-four years and died in the year 1347.

John, the only son of Lawrence Hastings, succeeded his father in the titles of Pembroke, Wexford and lord Abergavenny. During his minority the king appointed one Sir John Hakelute, knight, to be custos of the earldom of Pembroke. And after, this earl married, first, Margaret the daughter of King Edward m but she dying within three years after without issue. After, he married Agnes, the daughter of Walter de Manny. But shortly after, he was sent by the king into France, being twenty-seven years old, with a great power to raise the French siege before Rochelle, but by chance being set upon by a fleet of Spaniards he was by them taken prisoner and carried into Spain, where he remained about two years in prison and was by them sold to a nobleman of France named Bertram Cleyken, Constable of France, but at his departure they poisoned him at a banquet so that shortly after his coming into France he died, after his ransom was brought to Calais, being 6,000 francs. He was earl 28 years and died in the year 1375, having one son scarce three years old then living. Great controversies grew between this John, Lord Hastings, and Nicholas de Audley, then lord of Cemais, touching the claims and liberties of the lordship of Cemais, which controversies had been on foot before and partly pacified, as before is declared, the said Earl of Pembroke claiming the said lordship to be held of him, as of his earldom, and by colour therefore pretended to have divers jurisdictions within the same, which were all gainsaid and withstood by the Lord Audley, affirming that he

held the said barony of Cemaïs of the Crown of England and that the said earl, nor his ancestors, by colour of any such tenure ought not to claim or meddle within the said lordship of Cemaïs, which matters grew to that height that it could not be pacified until both parties were required by King Edward III to pacify themselves and to end those causes by some good means. Whereupon they referred the controversies between them to be heard and decided by the said King Edward III and his Privy Council, but before anything was done the king and the said Lord Hastings died, whereupon the causes were again referred to King Richard II and to the lords of the Privy Council, by whom a final end was made and their award published under the Great Seal of England, as by the same yet extant to be seen may appear .

John Hastings the Younger succeeded his father in all his honours, but for that he was very young the king gave the keeping of the earldom of Pembroke to William, Lord Beauchamp. This John Hastings married Philippa, daughter of Edmund Mortimer. Her mother was Philippa, daughter of Lionel, Duke of Clarence. This earl, being with King Richard II at Woodstock in the Christmas, as he was learning to run at tilt was by mishap slain with a spear which his very friend the Lord St. John threw from him, so that he died without issue in the year 1389 after he had been earl 14 years. His great inheritance fell to his kinsman Sir Edward Hastings, knight, who for some displeasure the king bore towards him, was cast into the Fleet where he died without issue, and the king seized all the inheritance belonging to the said John Hastings into his hands, though afterwards the Lord Reginald Grey de Ruthin made claim to the same as next heir then living of John Hastings and Elizabeth de Valence. Thus was the earldom of Pembroke and lordship of Wexford taken from the right heirs by King Richard after the said earldom had continued in one family by descent 280 years, which King Richard, as it seems, retained and kept the said earldom in his own hands eight years. But as yet I can find no record, but by computation of years it seems to fall out so.

The Hastings

In the year 1397 King Richard II gave the earldom of Pembroke to his wife, Queen Isabel, and, under her, Thomas Percy, Earl of Worcester and lord of Haverford, was made custos of the earldom, which they enjoyed until the coming in of King Henry IV, who took all again into his hands.

15th Century

Henry IV gave the earldom of Pembroke to his son John, who was after Duke of Bedford, but he dying without issue, Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester, his brother, succeeded him as next heir and was Earl of Pembroke. This John, Duke of Bedford, in 1417 was by Act of Parliament made Regent of England and Head of the Commonwealth during the king's abode in France, and in 1427 was made Regent of France. He fought the battle of Verneuil in Perche, where he took prisoner the Duke of Alencon, General of the Frenchmen, three other lords, three knights, 200 gentlemen, and there was then killed of the French four earls, ten lords, one viscount. There were also slain and taken that day of the Scots, that came to aid the French, one duke, two earls, ten Scottish knights and 2,700 Scots of name and arms, so that by account of heralds there were slain in the battle of French and Scottish, 9,700. This noble Duke of Bedford died in 1434 and lies honourably buried in the cathedral church of Notre Dame in Rouen in Normandy, in the north side of the high altar there, where was erected a sumptuous and costly monument yet extant, agreeable to the nobleness of his person.

Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester, brother to the said John, Duke of Bedford, succeeded him as next heir and was Earl of Pembroke. This Humphrey, after that he had married Eleanor Cobham, gave her the earldom of Pembroke so that from thenceforth she was in all deeds joint with him by the name of Eleanor, Countess of Pembroke. He deceased the 24th of February in year 1447 leaving no issue behind him, at which time he was Duke of Gloucester, Earl of Pembroke and Lord Chamberlain of England and lord of many other honours. He was made Protector of England during the King's minority. This is he that was called the Good Duke of Gloucester. The praise of this good man is set forth at large by Mr. Fox in his first volume, page 704. He lies buried at St. Alban's, as Holinshed says.

Immediately upon the decease of Duke Humphrey, the earldom of Pembroke was by King Henry VI given to William de la Pole, who then was advanced to the title of Duke of March, Earl of Suffolk and Pembroke, and Lord Chamberlain of England, which honours he enjoyed but a short space, for at the next Parliament, being in 1450, he was banished the realm and shipped in Suffolk intending to pass into France but was taken by one [], captain of a ship of war, which the Duke of Exeter had on the seas. This captain brought him back again into Dover Road and there caused his head to be chopped off upon a cock-boat. His body after was buried at Wingfield College in Suffolk. Then came the earldom again into the king's hands who held it two years in his possession. The cause of his death was that he should be one that procured the death of Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester, and that he with Saye, bishop of Sarum and Trevilian, laboured and procured the giving over of the dukedom of Anjou and the earldom of Maine to the French king.

Jasper Tudor

King Henry VI, in the year 1452, created his brother Jasper Tudor, being his brother by his mother's side, Earl of Pembroke, giving the said earldom to him

and to the heirs male of his body, who enjoyed the same about seven years until that Edward IV deposed the said King Henry from the crown in the year 1461, at which time the said Jasper was attainted of treason and fled the realm.