

= Loughor Castle =

Loughor Castle is a ruined , medieval fortification located in the town of Loughor , Wales . The castle was built around 1106 by the Anglo @-@ Norman lord Henry de Beaumont , during the Norman invasion of Wales . The site overlooked the River Loughor and controlled a strategic road and ford running across the Gower Peninsula . The castle was designed as an oval ringwork , probably topped by wicker fence defences , and reused the remains of the former Roman fort of Leucarum .

Over the next two centuries , the castle was involved in many conflicts . It was attacked and burnt , probably in the Welsh uprising of 1151 , and was captured by the forces of Llywelyn the Great in 1215 . John de Braose acquired the castle in 1220 and repaired it , constructing a stone curtain wall to replace the older defences . Attacked again in 1251 , the castle was reinforced with a stone tower in the second half of the 13th century . It declined in importance during the late @-@ medieval period , and by the 19th century , the castle was ruinous and overgrown with ivy .

In the 21st century , Loughor Castle is controlled by the Welsh heritage agency Cadw and operated as a tourist attraction . The ruined tower and fragments of the curtain wall still survive on top of the ringwork 's earthwork defences , which now resemble a motte , or mound , and are part of the Loughor Castle Park .

= = History = =

= = = 1st ? 4th centuries = = =

Loughor Castle is located 11 kilometres ( 6 @.@ 8 mi ) west of Swansea in South @-@ West Wales , overlooking the River Loughor . The site was first used by the Romans for a military fort , one of a sequence running across South @-@ West Wales . The fort , Leucarum , took its name from the Celtic name for the River Loughor . Its location provided good visibility across the region and enabled it to support naval units operating in the Bristol Channel . It also controlled a ford across the River Loughor ; this ford had probably emerged by the time of the Roman period , and was passable at high tide . The fort was built around 75 AD and was used until the middle of the 2nd century ; it was then reoccupied by the Romans during the late 3rd and early 4th century , before being abandoned by the military .

= = = 11th ? 12th centuries = = =

The Normans began to make incursions into South Wales from the late @-@ 1060s onwards , pushing westwards from their bases in recently occupied England . Their advance was marked by the construction of castles , frequently on old Roman sites , for example those at Cardiff , Pevensey and Portchester , and the creation of regional lordships . Reusing former Roman sites in this way produced considerable savings in the manpower required to construct the large earth fortifications of the early castles .

Loughor Castle was constructed on the western edge of the Welsh commote , or land unit , of Gwyr . The castle was built shortly after 1106 , when Henry de Beaumont , the Earl of Warwick , was given the Gower Peninsula by Henry I. The Anglo @-@ Norman colonisation of the region followed , with Gower becoming a Marcher territory , enjoying extensive local independence . Loughor Castle was strategically important because it controlled the main road running through Gywr from Beaumont 's main base at Swansea Castle , and was a valuable coastal port . The castle took its name from a corruption of the title of the Roman fort .

In the 12th century , the castle would have been defended on its south side by a steep slope and the marshy ground running along the river . It was designed as an oval ringwork , which today is around 21 metres ( 69 ft ) by 18 metres ( 59 ft ) across and 12 metres ( 39 ft ) high , protected by a ditch 5 metres ( 16 ft ) wide and 2 metres ( 6 ft 7 in ) deep . The Roman fort in this corner was only

visible as earthworks in the 12th century , and the builders used part of these in the construction of the ringwork . The ringwork was made up of a core of river gravel and coarse sand , with finer sand and clay forming the surface layer . The ringwork had a protective wicker fence around the top of the earthworks and possibly some form of early stone or wooden tower , with a gateway just to the north side of it . It is unclear what kind of buildings were constructed inside the ringwork , although a kitchen was certainly built on the east side of the enclosure .

The first half of the 12th century was a violent period in Gower , with extensive fighting occurring between the Anglo -@ Normans and the local Welsh . Loughor Castle was attacked and burnt down around the middle of the century , probably as a part of a Welsh rebellion that devastated the area in 1151 . Henry II and the Welsh prince Rhys ap Gruffydd later agreed peace terms , and the castle was rebuilt . The inside of the ringwork was partially filled by debris during the 1151 attack , and at some point in the next few decades the bank of the ringwork was also deliberately widened inwards in places , allowing buildings to be constructed on it . These changes started the process of filling in the middle of the ringwork which led to the castle today having a mound , or motte @-@ like , appearance .

At around the end of the 12th century , two stone buildings were constructed in the centre of the ringwork , one of them being around 8 metres ( 26 ft ) by 4 @.@ 5 metres ( 15 ft ) . The castle probably passed into the control of the King of England at around this time , in lieu of debts owed by the Earl of Warwick . War broke out again across South @-@ West Wales in 1189 on the death of Henry II , as Rhys and his sons attempted to reclaim the region .

= = = 13th ? 14th centuries = = =

Gower continued to see extensive fighting in the 13th century . Loughor Castle was given by King John to his ally William de Braose in 1203 ; William was a powerful Marcher Lord , and related to Rhys ap Gruffydd and his extended family . In 1208 , however , John and William argued ; their relationship broke down and the king attempted to confiscate Loughor and William 's other lands in the region . William allied himself with the Welsh prince Llywelyn the Great and war broke out . William died in 1211 , but his son , Reginald , continued fighting and married Gwladus , Llywelyn 's daughter . In 1215 , the castle was captured by Llywelyn 's forces and control of Gower was granted to Reginald . Two years later , however , Reginald made peace with the English Crown and Llywelyn removed him from power , replacing him with the Welsh prince Rhys Gryg . Contemporary chroniclers recorded that Rhys Gryg deliberately destroyed all the castles in Gower as part of his campaign to dominate the area .

Llywelyn married another of his daughters , Margaret , to Reginald 's nephew , John de Braose , and in 1220 Llywelyn gave him Gower and Loughor Castle , which John appears to have set about repairing . As part of this work , a stone curtain wall was built around the castle . This included a sally port on the north side of the castle .

In 1232 the castle was inherited by John 's son , William de Braose , and in turn his son , also called William . In the second half of the century , Wales saw a renewal of fighting , and the castle was attacked again in 1251 . The decision was taken to improve the castle 's defences and , as part of this , a square , stone tower was added to the castle to provide living accommodation , with three chambers , the first floor containing a garderobe and a fireplace . A gateway was constructed through the curtain wall just to the south of the tower . Two further stone buildings were constructed within the castle walls .

In 1302 , William de Braose granted the Loughor estate to his seneschal , John Yweyn , for life , in exchange for an annual fee of a greyhound collar . On John Yweyn 's death in 1322 the lands were seized by John de Mowbray , William 's son @-@ in @-@ law . John was involved in the rebellion against Edward II , however , and was executed later in 1322 ; John Yweyn 's next of kin , Alice Roculf , successfully appealed to the king and was granted the lands instead . Edward fell from power in 1327 , and the Loughor lands were granted to John de Mowbray 's son , John .

= = = 15th ? 21st centuries = = =

The importance of Loughor Castle and the surrounding town declined in the late 12th-13th medieval period , and by the 19th century the castle had been ruined for many years and was covered in ivy . The castle was painted by the artist William Butler in the 1850s , who depicted the ruins alongside the local industries and the new railway line that had been cut through the remains of the former Roman fort .

In the 1940s , the south 12th-13th east corner of the castle tower collapsed ; the corner fell to the ground intact and because of its archaeological value it was decided to leave the fallen stonework in place on the ground , rather than risk further damaging it by removing it . In 1946 the castle was given to the Ministry of Works , and is now in the control of the Welsh heritage agency Cadw and operated as a tourist attraction . The castle sits within the grounds of the small Loughor Castle Park .

Archaeological investigations were carried out between 1969 ? 71 and in 1973 . The castle is protected as a scheduled monument under UK law . Much of the curtain wall has been stolen and destroyed since the medieval period , although fragments remain up to 1 12th-13th 5 metres ( 4 ft 11 in ) high , and the ruins of the tower remain a prominent feature of the local area .